MY ADVENTURES DURING THE LATE WAR 1804-1814

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MY ADVENTURES DURING THE LATE WAR

1804-14

W. O'Brien

London, Edward Arnold, 1902.

MY ADVENTURES DURING THE LATE WAR

A NARRATIVE OF SHIPWRECK, CAPTIVITY
ESCAPES FROM FRENCH PRISONS, AND SEA SERVICE
IN 1804-14

BY

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CAPT. R.N.

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IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

NEW EDITION, ILLUSTRATED
WITH A PREFACE, NOTES, AND BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

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READING ROOM

PREFACE

While engaged during the last ten years in the task of mastering the original authorities for the history of the Napoleonic wars, I have had to peruse many scores of diaries, autobiographies, and journals of the British military and naval officers who were engaged in the great struggle. They vary, of course, in interest and importance, in literary value, and in the power of vivid presentation of events. But they have this in common, that they are almost all very difficult to procure. Very few have been reprinted; indeed, I believe that the books of Lord Dundonald, Kincaid, John Shipp, Gleig, and Mercer are well nigh the only ones which have passed through a second edition. Yet there are many others which contain matter of the highest interest, not only for the historical student, but for every intelligent reader. From among these I have made a selection of ten or a dozen which seem to me well worth republishing.

Among these is the present volume—the narrative of the three escapes of Donat O'Brien from French captivity, and of his subsequent services in the Mediterranean during the last years of the great French war. I imagine that no prisoner—not excluding Baron Trenck himself—ever made *three* such desperate dashes for liberty as did this enterpris-

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ing Irish midshipman. It is fortunate that he found the leisure, and had the skill, to narrate all his adventures. He had a talent for minute description, a wonderful memory, and a humorous way of looking on the world which will remind the reader of the spirit of Captain Marryat's naval heroes.

It is not, I think, generally known that O'Brien's escapes actually suggested to Marryat a great part of the plot of one of his best known books—*Peter Simple.* In that excellent romance the narrator (it will be remembered) actually escapes from Givet in company with an Irish naval officer, and goes through a hundred perils before reaching safety. It was a strange liberty to take with a living comrade, that Marryat actually names *Peter Simple's* comrade O'Brien, and utilises many touches from the real Donat's adventures to make his tale vivid. In the end the fictitious O'Brien plays a great part in the story and marries the hero's sister. What the retired captain thought, or said, on finding himself thus liberally dealt with in a novel is not recorded. But I fancy that he must have considered it hard that *Peter Simple* should be reprinted some thirty times, while his own most interesting book never saw a second edition.

It is now very rare: in ten years of systematic searching of second-hand book shops, in quest of old military and naval autobiographies, I have only come on three copies of the work. I trust that by this edition it may be brought once more to common knowledge.

The reader will find in it a most wonderful study of the life of a hunted man, "a sort of Nebuchadnezzar living on cabbage stalks," as O'Brien styles himself, during his miserable lurking in the cliffs of the Vosges.

Almost as interesting is the sketch of the gloomy existence of the thousand "refractory" British prisoners in the *souterrains* of the rock-fortress of Bitche. French writers have often denounced the Portsmouth pontoons, on which so many of their compatriots were forced to dwell. But they compare favourably with the underground dungeons in which Napoleon confined O'Brien and many another British sailor. In strong contrast with this part of the story is the short narrative of life in Verdun, where the *détenus* on parole seem to have been allowed as much, and even more, liberty than was good for them. Roulette tables and race meetings were demoralising luxuries for men suffering from enforced idleness. From other sections of O'Brien's narrative the reader may obtain curious side-lights on many features of the Napoleonic *régime* in France—the ubiquity of the *gendarme* and his natural prey, the escaped conscript, the bare and squalid life of the peasantry, the estrangement between the military caste and the *bourgeoisie*. There are also glimpses of Germany during the existence of the *Rheinbund*, when the people were united in a sort of tacit conspiracy against the governments who had made themselves the tools of Bonaparte. Not least interesting are the final chapters, in which O'Brien, free at last, shows us how British naval ascendency was maintained in the Adriatic, and helps us to realise the truth of the saying that "wherever a boat could float Bonaparte's power found its limit." It was to no purpose that he called himself king of Italy, annexed Dalmatia and Illyria, and established his brother-in-law at Naples: three or four British frigates, based on the island stronghold of Lissa, dominated the whole seaboard, ransacked every estuary,

and destroyed whatever naval force was sent against them —even though it was on paper twice their own strength. Hoste's battle of 13th March 1811 was, as far as mere disparity of numbers goes, a victory that can be compared to St. Vincent alone among all the long list of British successes at sea.

I have ventured to cut short O'Brien's narrative at the end of the Napoleonic war. It went no further in his own first draft, which (as I have stated in the succeeding biographical note) was compiled before 1815. When he published his two-volume book, in 1839, he subjoined to his narrative of captivity and naval service three long chapters, detailing his visits and rambles in England and Ireland during the years of his middle age, his cruise to Brazil and Chile in 1818-21, and his continental tour with his wife in 1827. In these 150 pages there is so little matter to interest either the historical student or the general reader, that I have thought it well to omit them. For O'Brien, as for so many other British soldiers and seamen, "the joy of eventful living" ended in 1815.

For this excision, and for certain other small cuttings, I think that I may appeal with a clear conscience for the pardon that editors are wont to demand.

C. OMAN.

Oxford, *September* 1902.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Donat Henchy O'Brien was born in County Clare during the month of March 1785. Of his odd combination of names, the first was one common in the sept of the O'Briens since the earliest ages: it has nothing to do with St. Donatus, as the casual reader might suppose, but represents the old Erse Donough or Donoght.[1] His second name came from his mother, a Miss Henchy, sister of Counsellor Fitz-Gibbon Henchy, a Dublin lawyer of some repute in his day. Of Donat's father we find nothing more in O'Byrne's *Naval Biography* than the characteristically Hibernian statement that "he was descended from one of the ancient monarchs of Ireland."

Donat O'Brien entered the navy on 16th December 1796, when only eleven, starting even younger than the average of the midshipmen of those hard days. Apparently he owed his introduction to the service to Captain (afterwards Rear-Admiral) Edward Walpole Brown, whom he styles "his early patron." His first vessel was the *Overyssel* (64), a Dutch line-of-battle ship which had been

[1] The most celebrated bearers of the name were Donogh O'Brien, King of Thomond (1208-1244), and Earl Donough O'Brien (1577-1624), one of Queen Elizabeth's few Irish loyalists and a noted fighter in her behalf.

men named Ashworth and Tuthill. After making their way through countless dangers as far as Étaples on the coast of Picardy, they were seized by *douaniers* when actually in sight of the sea and the English cruisers in the Channel. Their status being soon discovered, they were sent back to prison, after an Odyssey which had lasted from the 28th of August to the 18th of September 1807.

After recapture O'Brien and his companions were told off for confinement in the mountain-fort of Bitche, a bleak fastness in the Vosges, appropriated to refractory or undesirable prisoners of war. While on their journey thither, escorted by mounted *gendarmes*, the prisoners had a chance of escape—they made a sudden dash for a neighbouring wood and ran for their lives. In their flight they soon lost sight of each other, and, while the others were recaptured, O'Brien got away. He made for the nearest neutral frontier, that of Austria, and nearly reached his goal. After passing the Rhine, crossing the Black Forest, and working far into Bavaria, he was arrested on suspicion at Lindau on the Lake of Constance. It was soon discovered that he was an escaped English prisoner, and the Bavarian Government sent him back under escort to France. His second futile attempt to escape had covered the period from 15th November to 30th November 1807.

His two desperate dashes for freedom secured O'Brien a place in the most miserable subterranean casemate of Bitche. Nevertheless, after a year's captivity this undaunted master's mate once more escaped—this time in company with a midshipman named Hewson, a dragoon officer named Batley, and a surgeon named Barklimore. Having constructed a rope, they let themselves down from

the three concentric walls of Bitche, a height of 200 feet in all, and got clear away.

This time fortune was with O'Brien. He and two of his companions (the third, Captain Batley, fell ill at Rastadt and had to be left behind) crossed South Germany in safety, and reached the Austrian frontier not many miles from Salzburg. The local officials politely acquiesced in a transparent fiction by which the fugitives pretended to be Americans, and allowed them to proceed to Trieste, where they were picked up by a boat of the *Amphion*, one of O'Brien's old ships. The third voyage of this much-travelled man had lasted from 15th September to 7th November 1808.

We need not linger over his service in the Mediterranean on the *Amphion*, *Warrior*, and *Bacchante*. Suffice it to say that he became a lieutenant on 29th March 1809, and was promoted to the rank of commander on 22nd January 1813. He had seen much service during these four years, and had once been severely wounded in an unsuccessful attempt to board and capture a Venetian *trabaccolo* off Trieste. The most important action in which he was engaged was Commodore Hoste's victory off Lissa on 13th March 1811.

On being promoted to the rank of commander, O'Brien had to return to England, no ship being available for him in the Mediterranean. He arrived at Portsmouth on 4th October 1813, and took for some months a well-earned holiday. He was in hopes of seeing service against the Americans, but the times were unpropitious. Both the Napoleonic and the American wars were coming to an end, and, like so many other energetic naval and military men, O'Brien found himself placed on half-pay in 1814.

He only had one more turn of service afloat, in command of the *Slaney*, a 20-gun sloop, which cruised on the South American station from 1818 to 1821. The rest of his life—he was still only thirty-six years of age—was spent in enforced retirement: in the thirties and forties the navy was kept low, and there was little prospect of work for the half-pay captain.

On 28th June 1825 O'Brien married Hannah, youngest daughter of John Walmsley of Castle Mere, Lancashire, by whom he became the father of a large family, seven children in all. Two years after, he took his wife for a long tour round northern France, to show her the places of his imprisonments and escapes. It was this revisiting of old scenes that caused him to write the book which we have here reprinted. But he did not publish it till 1839, when it appeared, dedicated by permission to the young Queen Victoria. He had, however, already put out long before a shorter narrative of his escape, from which the two-volume book of 1839 was expanded. It had appeared in the *Naval Chronicle* for the years 1812-15, in the strange form of sixteen "Naval Bulletins" addressed to no less a person than the Emperor Napoleon. The dedication of this original draft deserves reproduction—it runs as follows:—

"As your Imperial Majesty has long delighted in the compilation of endless Bulletins, as they are styled, in which truth and candour are never suffered to appear, it may perhaps amuse you, during some of these pauses which occasionally occur in your systematic destruction and humiliation of your fellow-creatures, to be enabled to hear a little truth, and to trace the manner in which such a humble individual as myself bade defiance to your persecu-

tions, and has at length returned to his duty as a naval officer, notwithstanding all the dungeons, fetters, and insults which distinguished your reign of despotism."

The last of the "Naval Bulletins" appeared in the same number of the *Naval Chronicle* as a narrative by Henry Ashworth, one of the companions of O'Brien's first escape. From this, an incomplete story, which Ashworth did not survive to finish, certain parts of O'Brien's tale can be corroborated and expanded.

O'Brien was promoted to the rank of rear-admiral on 8th March 1852. He survived five years more, and died on 13th May 1857 at Yew House, Hoddesdon, in his seventy-third year.

The not very flattering portrait of him which we have reproduced as our frontispiece was drawn by J. Pelham and engraved by J. Brown for the book of 1839.

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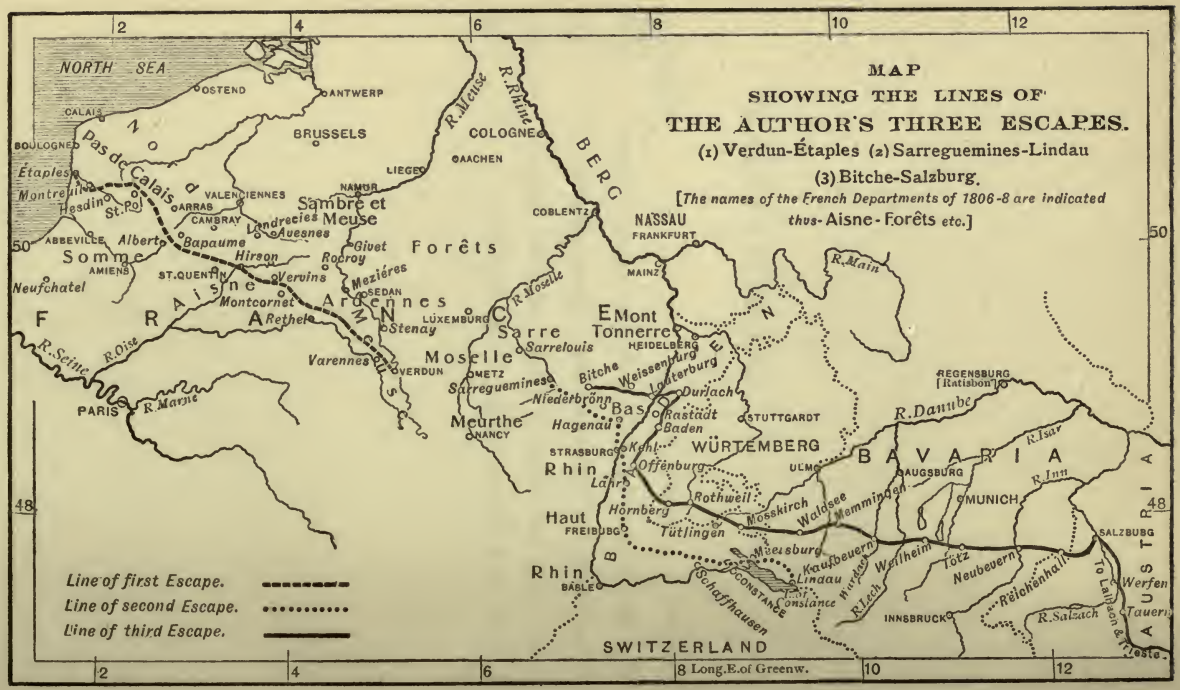
MAP
SHOWING THE LINES OF
THE AUTHOR'S THREE ESCAPES.
(1) Verdun-Étaples (2) Sarreguemines-Lindau
(3) Bitche-Salzburg.
[The names of the French Departments of 1806-8 are indicated thus- Aisne - Forêts etc.]
NORTH SEA
OSTEND
ANTWERP
CALAIS
BOULOGNE
BRUSSELS
COLOGNE
AACHEN
LIEGE
NAMUR
Étaples
Montreuil
Hesdin
St. Pol
ARRAS
VALENCIENNES
CAMBRAY
Sambre et Meuse
Landrecies
Avesnes
ABBEVILLE
Albert
Bapaume
Hirson
Givet
Rocroy
Forêts
Somme
AMIENS
ST. QUENTIN
Vervins
Mezières
SEDAN
Neufchatel
Aisne
Montcornet
Rethel
Ardennes
LUXEMBURG
Stenay
Varennes
VERDUN
Sarre
Sarrelouis
Moselle
METZ
Sarreguemines
Mont Tonnerre
HEIDELBERG
Weissenburg
Landerburg
Durlach
Bitche
Niederbronn
Bas Rastadt
Baden
Hagenau
STUTTGARDT
Meurthe
NANCY
STRASBURG
Kehl
WÜRTEMBERG
Offenburg
Rhin
Lahr
ULM
Rothweil
Hornberg
Haut Rhin
FREIBURG
Tütlingen
Waldsee
Memmingen
Mosskirch
Messkirch
Meesburg
Kaufbeuren
Linau
Wertach
R. Lech
Wellheim
Tötz
Neubeuern
Reichenhall
SALZBURG
Werfen
Tauern
Leoben
BAVARIA
AUGSBURG
MUNICH
R. Isar
R. Inn
R. Danube
REGENSBURG [Ratisbon]
AUSTRIA
INNSBRUCK
R. Salzach
To Laybach & Trieste
BASLE
Schaffhausen
CONSTANCE
Constance
SWITZERLAND
R. Moselle
R. Meuse
R. Rhine
R. Main
MAINZ
FRANKFURT
NASSAU
COBLENTZ
R. Seine
R. Oise
R. Marne
PARIS
Line of first Escape.
Line of second Escape.
Line of third Escape.
2
4
6
8 Long. E. of Greenw.
10
12
48
50

CHAPTER I

The *Hussar* Frigate is sent home with despatches, and wrecked on the *Saintes*—Efforts to save the ship—Attempt to escape in the boats foiled by bad weather—A surrender to the enemy.

It was on Monday, the 6th February 1804, that the *Hussar* made sail from Ares Bay in Spain, being bound for England with despatches, from our commodore Sir Edward Pellew, and with orders first to communicate with our Channel Fleet off Brest. We had a fresh breeze from the S.W.; and on the succeeding day (Tuesday, 7th) the wind and weather were nearly the same. At noon, to the best of my recollection, we were in lat. 46° 50′, Ushant bearing N. 37° E., distant 113 or 114 miles.

On Wednesday (8th) the wind and weather were the same, and we were steering, as nearly as I can recollect, N.E. by E., and running nine knots an hour. Every heart was elated with the joyful expectation of being safely moored in a few hours in the land of liberty. Some were employed in writing to their friends and relatives; but, alas! how frail and delusive are the hopes of man! How differently had our lot been decreed! The happy arrival, with many, never took place. With all the others it was long delayed; and the vicissitudes and miseries we were doomed to suffer will amply appear in the subsequent pages.

It was upon this fatal Wednesday, at about 10.45 P.M., whilst steering this course of N.E. by E., and running at the rate of about seven knots an hour, in dark and hazy weather, the *Hussar* struck upon the southernmost point of the *Saintes*. We beat over an immense reef of rocks, carried away our tiller in several pieces, unshipped the rudder, and, from the violence of beating over the reef, we damaged the ship's bottom so considerably that the leak became very serious. At length we got into deep water, and let go our bower anchors, to prevent being dashed to pieces on the immense rocks ahead. We got our top-gallant yards and masts on deck, and used every possible means to lighten the ship. The greater part of the crew were kept at the pumps; whilst the remainder, with the officers, were employed in staving the water-casks in the hold, in shoring the ship up, as the ebb tide was making and she was inclining to starboard, and in doing all that was deemed expedient to the safety of the ship. All was unavailing. The carpenter reported that she was bilged; and we could distinctly hear the rocks grinding and working through her as the tide fell.

At daylight Mr. Weymouth (the master) was sent to sound for a passage amongst the rocks, on the supposition that we might be able to buoy the ship through, but he returned without success; though, had he accomplished it, from the state the ship was in, there could have been little hope of getting her out. A division of the seamen and marines, with their respective officers, was then ordered to take possession of the island, that in the last extremity there might be an asylum secured for the men and officers. The rest of the crew remained at the pumps, but with no success, as the leak kept gaining upon them. The island

was taken without any opposition, the only people on it being a few distressed fishermen and their families.

About 11 A.M. we began to land the crew, no hopes remaining of being able to save our ship. However, the remainder of the people kept still working at the pumps, waiting the return of the boats. At noon, the flood making strongly, and we fore-reaching withal, Captain Wilkinson gave directions to let go the sheet-anchor, which was immediately done. Strong gales from S.W.

February 9th.—By about 1 P.M. everybody was safely landed, with two or three pigs and some biscuit, which were the only subsistence we had secured. Captain Wilkinson and Mr. Weymouth came in the last boat. At about 1.30 P.M. Lieutenant Pridham, with Messrs. Carey, Simpson, and Thomas (three warrant-officers), and myself, were ordered by the captain to return to the ship, to cut her masts away, and destroy everything we could possibly get at. On our arrival on board, the water was nearly square with the combings of the lower deck. At about 3.30 P.M. we quitted her, having executed with the greatest accuracy the duty we were ordered upon: the wind still increasing, left us but little hope of her hanging together for the night.

We joined the officers and crew in a small church; and this was the only place on the island where we could conveniently take up our residence. The weather was excessively inclement during the night. At daylight, discovering the ship still apparently whole, Captain Wilkinson despatched Mr. Pridham and Mr. Mahoney (master's mate), with a party of men, to destroy her by fire. The other officers and people were employed in equipping

thirteen fishing-boats, which belonged to the inhabitants,[1] for the purpose of transporting the ship's company, either to our fleet off Brest or to England, as circumstances might admit. Mr. Pridham and his party returned, and the report of the ship's guns announced the execution of the duty they had been sent upon.

On the 10th, at about 1.30 P.M., our boats were in readiness, it then blowing hard from the S.W. We all embarked in them. I had the honour to command one, with twenty-five men; Captain Wilkinson, with the master, leading in the barge, which was the only ship's boat in company. We made sail out of the little creeks in which the boats had been moored, the sea running excessively high, and at about two the barge hauled up to the N.W. We all, of course, followed. About 2.30 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon we bore up again. Several of the boats were in distress, being very badly found, having neither sails, rigging, nor ground tackling that could be at all trusted to. Lieutenants Pridham and Lutwidge (who remained prisoners of war until the peace of 1814), and Lieutenant Barker (who was afterwards killed in a duel at Verdun), were to keep ahead, as no other boat had compasses. At about five, in a very severe squall with rain, we lost sight of the barge. Everybody in our boat was of opinion that she had been upset; and at 5.30 P.M., it blowing extremely hard, with a heavy shower of rain, we lost sight of all the boats. At about six we observed St. Matthew's Light[2] on the weather bow. The

[1] I here feel it a duty to state, that, for the boats which we seized from the poor fishermen, bills of exchange were given to the full amount of their value upon the English Government.

[2] Pointe St. Mathieu, on the left upon entering Brest.

wind now chopped round to the N.W., in a very heavy squall, which carried away our mainmast in the step [1] and fore-tye, and very nearly swamped us, having almost filled the boat with water. We chipped the heel of the mainmast, restepped it, and rove the main-tye and halliards forward, which enabled us to set the foresail, and keep scudding before the wind to Rock Fort, with the expectation of falling in with some of the other boats; but in this we were disappointed. At eleven we determined to anchor at the bottom of Bertheaume Bay, though with very little or no hope of riding long, our only ground tackling being a small grapnel and a very few fathoms of one inch and a half rope.

We providentially succeeded in bringing up, though we were, unfortunately, too near the shore and most miserably situated: the weather tide, running strongly against a violent gale from the N.W., occasioned such a sea as to bury us frequently in its abyss.

At 2 A.M., the sea breaking in a most terrific manner over us, and finding that we were driving and almost touching abaft, expecting every second to be dashed on the rocks astern of us, we hauled in briskly on the grapnel rope, hoisted the foresail and wore round, paying out the grapnel rope just hauled in, until we brought it right over the quarter, which enabled us to get our grapnel on board with ease; then we stood over to the Camaret Bay side, in the hope of falling in with some little haven to shelter us, or with one of the other boats; but we were disappointed in either expectation.

At about 4.30 A.M., finding we advanced towards Brest

[1] The step is that part of the mast that fixes in the boat; the fore-tye, the rope by which the foresail is hoisted up.

Harbour considerably, we resolved to try the grapnel once more; although we were not in the smallest degree sheltered from the inclemency of the weather, and were placed immediately under a fort, which we distinguished by its lights, that enabled us to see the sentinels on their posts walking to and fro. We made, if possible, worse weather here than at our former anchorage, with the exception that the grapnel held. At 7.30 A.M. the wind and weather became more inclement than on the preceding night. Not a boat of ours was in sight, every minute we expected to be hailed by the fort, and not a soul amongst us could speak a word of French. We were almost perishing and starved from the fatigue and sufferings of the night, the few provisions we had being totally destroyed by the salt water. Seeing no alternative but the pain and mortification of delivering myself and my boat's crew prisoners of war, I came at length to that resolution. Accordingly I ordered all the small arms in my boat to be hove overboard, and at eight cut the grapnel rope, and ran into Brest Harbour under the foresail.

Imagining that the boat's crew and myself might be better received and treated on board the commander-in-chief's ship than in a private vessel, I went alongside the *Alexandre*, which ship bore his flag, and I surrendered myself and my crew as prisoners of war.

CHAPTER II

A kind reception by the enemy—Our shipmates all prisoners—Consolations under misfortunes—Prisoners sent to the hospital at Brest—Robbery by a French seaman—Running the gauntlet—Dilemma of wearing or giving up a sword—Kindness of the French nuns—Orders to march into the Interior—Wounded pride and hard fare—Bad faith of the Minister of Marine—The march begins for Verdun—Arrival at Landernau—Aristocratic differences in rates of pay or allowances amongst republicans—Landiviziau—An illustration of equality—Morlaix to Rennes—Prisoners and vermin—Vitré—English dogs at a French inn—Laval—A spectacle for the mob—Alençon—Difficulties increased—Part of the crew separated from their officers—Our arrival at Rouen—An honest gaoler and his amiable wife—A moderate bill for gaol fare—*Bons garçons* in a prison—Our arrival at Amiens—English sympathy for suffering countrymen.

I WAS not disappointed in my expectations, for I was received with the utmost civility. Every attention was paid to me, and I was provided with a suit of dry clothes. They got me instantly (of which I never before stood more in need) a warm draught, and gave each of my men a glass of liquor, and ordered breakfast for them, with everything else that was necessary to recruit exhausted nature, and to console them under their sufferings and misfortunes. The poor fellows were in a most deplorable state, shivering and shaking like aspen leaves; some of them were so worn out with fatigue, hunger, and the extreme severity of the

weather that they could scarcely articulate when spoken to. The French officers informed me also, that the whole of the boats, except mine and one other, from the extreme violence of the weather, had been obliged to make for Brest, and had arrived in the night; whilst they added that they had been under the greatest apprehensions for our safety, as it was not supposed possible, from the size of the boats and the manner they were found, that they could exist through the severity of the night. Lieut. Barker, Mr. Nepean, a midshipman, and now a commander, and Mr. Carey, the boatswain (who afterwards died at Verdun), came on board, from the other French ships-of-war in which they were prisoners, to congratulate me on my extraordinary escape and safe arrival. We were, however, under the strongest and most painful apprehensions that Mr. Robert James Gordon, the midshipman who commanded the boat which had not yet arrived, had perished with his companions.

The next day, the 11th, at 2 P.M., we were all sent on shore to the hospital at Brest, which was the place assigned to us, as each individual was more or less unwell from the hardships he had undergone.

To mark the character of the French seamen and of their naval service, I must here relate that a small leathern trunk or valise, in which I had saved a change of linen, etc., had been taken out of one of our marines' hands, by a French sailor who spoke a little English, under the pretence of saving him the trouble of carrying it down the ship's side; whilst the scoundrel, instead of putting it into the boat, handed it in through one of the lower-deck ports. Our marine, who remained on the ship's gangway, had construed the transaction into an act of kindness, and con-

cluded that the trunk had been safely deposited in the boat which was to carry us on shore; nor was the theft discovered until upon our landing, when the humble, though to me invaluable, property could not be found. I immediately communicated the fact to the officers who conducted us, and they instantly sent on board an order to search for the valise. In fact, they appeared excessively hurt that such an act of villainy should have been committed by one of their crew. They assured me that the perpetrator should be severely punished, and that my little portmanteau should be safely returned. I despaired of this very much, though I entertained little doubts of the first part of the promise being faithfully kept. In the meantime, these officers conducted us to the hospital, and insisted upon my wearing my sword all the way. The captain had refused to receive it on board, observing that I had been unfortunately wrecked, and not taken in fight, and, consequently, that I had no right to lose my sword; and he further remarked, that, in his opinion, we ought to be returned to our native country, and should not be considered as prisoners; but he added that the gaoler on shore would deprive me of my side-arms, which was afterwards the case.

On our arrival at the hospital, or rather prison (as we were closely watched and guarded), the gaoler took away my sword, and appeared very much enraged at my not allowing him to take my belt; this, I observed to him, could do no mischief. I now had the inexpressible happiness of shaking hands with all the officers, excepting Mr. Thomas (carpenter), who was unfortunately drowned in attempting to land in Bertheaume Bay, and Mr. Gordon (midshipman), who, I was very much pleased to hear, was

safe at Conquêt, where he had effected a landing. We expected him and his boat's crew round to Brest the following day.

On the 14th we had the pleasure of seeing him and his crew safely arrived; they spoke very handsomely of the treatment they had received at Conquêt and on the march. I now received part of the things that were in the valise, and the thief, I was informed, had run the gauntlet.

We were very well used during our stay here, and were attended by *religieuses*, or old nuns, which is a general custom in all the French hospitals. They were the most attentive nurses I ever beheld: constantly on the alert; visiting their patients; administering relief wherever it might be wanted; and always solacing the dejected.

On the 18th we received information that we should commence our march towards our depot on the following morning; and accordingly, on the 19th, we were ready at a moment's notice. At about eight o'clock we were all drawn up in the hospital yard. Mr. Mahoney and myself (being the senior midshipmen) took our stations, as we were accustomed, next to the lieutenants; but, to our great surprise, on the names being called over, we were moved, together with Mr. Carey, the boatswain, and Mr. Simpson, the gunner,[1] and placed next to the seamen. At the same time, each of us was offered a loaf of brown bread for the day's subsistence, which we declined. We demanded of the French officers an explanation of this extraordinary conduct, and they informed us that we were of a class (master's mates) different from any in their

[1] He escaped, subsequently to me, with some other naval officers, from Bitche.

navy, and that they had, therefore, ranked us as *adjutants*, or *sous-officers*, and they insisted that they could not make any alteration. Lieut. Pridham now interfered in our behalf. It appeared he had been made acquainted, on the preceding night, that we should be thus ranked; but not being versed in the regulations and titles of the French military service, he had supposed that an adjutant was equal to a rank between a midshipman and a lieutenant in our navy; and this, of course, he thought our proper place. After remonstrating for a long time against the impropriety of our being degraded to the ranks and put among the people, the officer agreed to go to the Minister of Marine[1] to have the business, as he termed it, arranged. He shortly returned; the Minister of Marine was out, but we received an assurance from his head clerk or secretary that the mistake should be rectified the moment he returned, and that a courier would be despatched after us to the next stage with another *feuille de route*. Thus far reconciled, we commenced our forced march—and, as we were informed, for Verdun, in Lorraine,—although our crew appeared quite indignant at this insult or disrespect offered to their officers, and refused to move until we persuaded them to be obedient.

At about seven in the evening we arrived at our first stage, the small and miserable village of Landernau, about twenty miles N.E. of Brest. I anxiously expected every moment the arrival of the courier, so little was I then acquainted with the nature of French promises and with the French character. Here, as a great favour, we were permitted to mix with the officers. Our allowance was

[1] Probably the *Préfet Maritime* of Brest is meant; the Minister of Marine would of course be at Paris.

eleven sous, or 5½d. per diem; whilst the youngest midshipman or volunteer had fifty. The allowance to the men, I believe, was only five sous.

At daylight, on the 20th, we commenced our march, rather more dejected than the day before. In the evening we arrived at Landiviziau, a distance of five or six leagues from Landernau, than which it was much smaller. Here we halted for the night, and the people were placed in stables, barns, etc. At daybreak, on the 21st, we commenced our march towards Morlaix. At about two in the afternoon, at four or five miles' distance from the town, we were met by a captain of *gendarmerie* and two *gendarmes*, who, we understood afterwards, came out to escort us into that place. They had not long joined us when I happened to discover one of our ship's boys lifting his hand to strike a young midshipman. I immediately ran up and chastised the youngster with a switch I fortunately had in my hand; but mark my amazement! when I beheld this blustering captain of *gendarmerie* foaming at the mouth, and riding up towards me at full speed, with his sword drawn. He appeared to be in a very great rage, swore vehemently, and wielded his sword repeatedly over my head. As I did not understand a syllable of what he spoke, but was certain it must be abusive language, from the passion he put himself into, I, parrot-like, repeated his own expressions as well as I could; which irritated him to such a degree, that had not the officer of infantry who was escorting us, and our own officers, interfered, I do not know to what length he might have carried the outrage. The officer of infantry expostulated with him on the impropriety of drawing his sword upon a naked prisoner, who could not even under-

stand a word that he said. He declared, and persisted in it, that I spoke as good French as he did; that we were all prisoners alike; that we were now in a country where every man enjoyed liberty; and he would take care that whilst we were with him we should not tyrannise over one another; or, in other terms, that the officers should be on an equality with the men. I observed that some of the crew understood him, and that they explained his meaning to others, which seemed to please them extremely.

We had not, however, marched more than a mile when a circumstance took place which gave us all a fine specimen of the liberty boasted of in this land of republicanism and equality. A poor man, who appeared to be at least seventy years of age, happened to be conducting a cart along the road, and as he was approaching us this lover of liberty called to him to turn his horses aside until we had passed; but the poor unfortunate old man not hearing, and continuing his way, this brute rode up to him, and beat and mauled him so unmercifully that the seamen literally hissed him, and asked repeatedly, "If that were the liberty he had so much vaunted about a few minutes before?"

At about five in the afternoon we arrived at Morlaix. Our people were lodged and treated for the night much as usual; but the officers, including myself and Mr. Mahoney, were allowed to go to a tavern. On inquiry I found that this redoubtable captain of the *gendarmerie* had been a weaver before the Revolution, and by his perfidy had got advanced to the rank he held. I was informed that he visited our people in the night, and used his utmost exertions to make them turn traitors and enter into the French service. Most glad am I to say that he found all

his efforts fruitless; and to the honour of our country be it related, that every proposal he made, every temptation he offered, was treated with disdain.

On the 22nd, about eight, we again commenced our route, and, after a long march, arrived at a small village, Belle-Isle-en-Terre, where we remained for the night, disagreeably situated, the village being excessively poor and small, the people extorting double prices for everything; however, this I have since found to be almost general throughout France.

On the 23rd, at the usual hour, about eight, we recommenced our route towards Guingamp, where we arrived tolerably early. It is a spacious town, and appeared well peopled. We rested here during twenty-four hours, and were pretty well treated. The country, though late in the season, appeared beautiful. It is very fertile, and yet the peasantry seemed excessively poor and distressed.

On the 25th, at daylight, we recommenced our march towards St. Brieux, the last town on the sea-coast that we had to touch at, and we arrived at about four o'clock. We were very closely guarded, which certainly was necessary, as the town was only a mile and a half from the sea, and it was the intention of a great number to slip their fetters; however, this proved impossible. We had another guard ordered, which we all regretted, as the officer who had conducted us from Brest to this place was a perfect gentleman, and preserved the utmost moderation towards the prisoners—who were not, by the bye, at all times very well behaved. I here planned an escape, but could not accomplish it.

At daylight, on the 26th, we recommenced our route with our new guard. About ten, in passing close to the

sea, we were halted; the guard loaded their pieces, examined their locks, and did everything to intimidate us and overawe any desire to resist them. They appeared to be alarmed lest we should attempt to escape, though they were nearly as many as their prisoners in number. It would have been a desperate business, and no vessels were near in which 300 men could be embarked; but the bare possibility of our escape had nearly induced us to run the risk.

About five we arrived at Lamballe, and on the 27th, at eight, we were put upon our march for Rennes. We arrived at our place of destination on the 29th. The officers were allowed to go to a tavern, but we who were still ranked as *adjutants* were conducted to the common gaol; and, notwithstanding a number of representations and remonstrances conveyed to the general commandant of the town, we were kept in confinement until the 2nd of March, having had at Rennes what was styled a day's *séjour*. Much rather would I have continued *en route*, as in this gaol we were associated with malefactors and criminals of every denomination, and, in despite of every effort, we found ourselves covered with vermin. We had at length another guard placed over us, joined our officers, and were very much pleased at being once more in the pure air.

We were now put upon our forced route to Vitré, where we arrived at about eight o'clock on the evening of 2nd March, having on this day walked the distance of nearly ten leagues, or about twenty-five English miles. At this town we met with but sorry treatment under our mortification and distresses. We had great difficulty to gain admittance into any inn, and still greater to procure

refreshments of any sort. Upon remonstrating with the landlord about our miserable supper, and at the exorbitant price he charged for it, he retorted by calling us "English dogs," and told us that we ought to be glad to get anything, and that the officers and public authorities were to blame for not placing us in a stable, or in some other place better appropriated to such brutes than an inn. If he had his will, he added, he would very soon treat us as such dogs deserved. In this strain he continued—a strain much less to our annoyance than his bad supper and extravagant charges. This specimen of the national feeling of France, at this period of excitement, shows that the French thought well of English bulldogs, at least with respect to their digesting a long bill of fare. The river Vilaine runs through Vitré, and the town seems supplied abundantly with fish.

At daylight, on the 3rd of March, we quitted our *polite* and *hospitable* host, and were marched towards Laval, a tolerably large town on the Mayenne, renowned for its linen manufactories. We arrived about five in the evening, and were kept some time in the market-place, as a *spectacle* for the inhabitants, before we were shown to our respective places for the night. Some of the people who could speak English came to inform us that our gracious sovereign, George the Third, had been dead several days and that the result would be a general peace. We spurned at their intelligence, and, much to their annoyance, assured them that we did not give them the smallest credit.

From Laval we passed through Préz-en-Paille, a very small town, to Alençon, where we arrived on the evening of the 5th, and were allowed to rest for twenty-four hours. Never was rest more needful to the desponding and weary.

We had now marched many days through bad roads during an inclement season, and under all the feelings that deprive the traveller of the elasticity of spirits which supports bodily health, and enables him to conquer all difficulties, to undergo all fatigues, and to disregard all privations. Hitherto our whole ship's company, with their officers, had been kept together, but now even this consolation was to be destroyed. At Alençon the high-road branches off in two directions, the one leading to Paris through Versailles, the other striking off to the N.E. to Seéz, Bernay, and Rouen. Unhappily the French rulers had ordered that what they termed "the officers" should travel to their journey's end by the former route, whilst the crew should proceed to their destined place of imprisonment by the road through Rouen. Here the mistake as to my rank by the Minister of Marine most seriously affected me. I was not to be included in the grade of officer. The lieutenants, midshipmen, and other officers were therefore ordered to march on the road to Paris, whilst I and Mr. Mahoney, with the boatswain and gunner, as *adjutants*, or no officers, were ordered to proceed with half of the ship's company by the road through Rouen to Charlemont, or Givet, in the department of the Ardennes.

I confess this separation grieved me extremely. Parting with my messmates and friends in a foreign country, together with the insult and injustice of being placed in an inferior rank to my brother officers, could not fail of producing the depression so natural to any honourable mind. The feeling was reciprocal on the part of my brother officers, and we separated with regret, they on the Paris route, and I and my companions on the more dreary road of the north.

Leaving Alençon, we passed through Seéz and Bernay, and at length arrived at Rouen, at about two in the afternoon of the 12th. The hardships we underwent were inconceivable.

This large and splendid city, with its magnificent cathedral and manufactures, and with the beautiful scenery that surrounds it, might excite expectation and joy in the approaching traveller, but no such sensations can be roused in him who has been exhausted in a prison, worn out by fatigue, disgusted by ill usage, and who has the prospect only of a long confinement.

Upon our arrival at Rouen we were all put into the common gaol, and it was of a character to give us not a very favourable idea of prison management or discipline in France. But I cannot pass over a circumstance that had happened before our arrival. Trivial as it is in one respect, it still illustrates the French character with respect to impositions in inns, even in the provincial towns or small villages.

About nine in the morning of the day on which we entered Rouen, we were halted at a village on the banks of the Seine, in order to procure refreshment, and yet all we could get were eggs and bread. But if an egg is to be eaten with a spoon, the spoon must bear some proportion to the egg: here, however, we were supplied with pewter spoons of no ordinary dimensions. I observed to the French officer who had us in custody, that smaller spoons would be more convenient; and, as he could not deny a truth so palpable, he asked the old lady of the house if she had any. She replied in the affirmative, and, with alacrity, opened a large coffer, and taking thereout six silver tea-spoons, placed them on the table. With these

spoons we ate our eggs, and, having finished our poor repast, we called for our bill; but what was the surprise of us poor and exhausted prisoners when, in our wretchedness, we found that the old hag had charged us—what in a French village is not a trifle—a penny each for the use of her silver spoons! Even the French officer was quite amazed, and asked her what she could mean by such a demand. The old mercenary creature, who proved herself a compound of extortion and nationality, replied with *sang froid*, "You see, sir, these Englishmen are so particular that they cannot even eat like other people. My spoons have not been out of my chest for a number of years, and I am determined they shall pay for the trouble they have put me to." The officer in charge ought to have resisted the imposition, but he made no such attempt; and, being defenceless, we paid our pennies, and respectfully wished the *honest old lady* a good morning.

I had another opportunity in Rouen of witnessing French shrewdness. I observed a number of brigs and small craft laid up in the river, in a dismantled and totally neglected state, and I could not help expressing, to one of the Frenchmen confined with us, my astonishment that those vessels should not have been equipped and sent to sea upon some commercial venture. "And where, sir," replied the Frenchman, "would be the use of the attempt when the English would have the vessels before they had completed one voyage?" This was unanswerable.

The prospect down the Seine was grand and beautiful. My view, however, was now changed to one of a very different character. The transition from the delightful scenery, with Nature's freshness and exhilaration, to the

miseries of a common gaol, was rapid, and much increased, in this instance, by the gloomy countenance of the gaoler and his dear companion of a wife. They exhibited to us a perfect specimen of matrimonial concord, for both cordially agreed in accosting us in very antipathetic terms; and they were still more matrimonially harmonious in their assurances that if we did not instantly pay for *two* nights' lodgings we should be placed in cells not of the best description and with culprits of the very worst. We could not entertain the slightest suspicion of the veracity of these worthy people, nor could we conceive a doubt that we were under the dominion of absolute and irresponsible power; and, notwithstanding we knew that what these kind people had said was a law, we took the liberty of asking why they demanded payment for *two nights;* and in matrimonial concord they replied, "That we were going to enjoy *one day's* rest in the gaol, and that the officer who had escorted us had assured them of the fact." There was no resisting such logic, nor could we maintain the position that the French Government ought to provide for its prisoners of war; and we were reduced to the necessity of paying for the comfort of a two-nights' lodging in gaol which we had the happiness of occupying for only one whole day.

This French officer, whose name, to the best of my recollection, was Galway, lived with us in all the small towns through which we passed, professing a great deal of friendship for us, whilst we were paying his expenses, and repeatedly declaring that he would prevent our being confined in the gaol of Rouen—would be himself responsible for us on account of our gentlemanly conduct, and by that means enable us to remain at an inn. But, alas! so shallow

was this honourable gentleman's memory that he even forgot to leave us our last day's allowance, or prisoner's money, of eleven sous, or fivepence halfpenny sterling, and did not recollect to give to his successor in power over us the certificate he had received from our officers, stating our rank, and explaining the unfortunate mistake that had been made upon this subject at Brest. His keeping the point of honour, and of honesty and duty, would have been of material service to us; but I suppose that he did not even recollect, after he had disposed of us, that there was a gaol in the city, for we never saw him or heard of him after we had been placed under bars and bolts.

It was now that we came into terms with our host and his rib, and paid them a sum, equal to two shillings each, for the two nights' lodging. This pleased them so much that they were convinced that we were officers and gentlemen; and they conducted us, with a great deal of respect and politeness, into an apartment in which there were two prisoners and three beds. Two of the beds were assigned to us. Our room-mates, we soon discovered, were debtors. The landlady very charitably observed that she was certain that we must be faint and in want of refreshment; and she kindly added that she would send us some bread and a bottle of good wine for the present, and would procure us, *pauvres enfans!* a comfortable dinner in about an hour's time; and then she and her husband, after a thousand curtsies and bows, withdrew, not forgetting to turn the key in the door and to take it with them. We all agreed that this was a considerate, charitable, good woman; but much more did we extol her when we saw the bottle of wine and loaf of bread. The man who brought it was a smart, active turnkey, who said, "Mistress is very busy in

cooking dinner for the English captains. I have had the pleasure of waiting very frequently on British officers in this prison—they were very extravagant, and liked to live very well," etc. But this conversation did not by any means suit his present guests; so we made signs to the fellow to be off. He quitted us, taking the same precaution that his master had done. Our finances were ebbing fast, and we began to fear the dinner which was preparing for us would not help to relieve them. I have already observed that we had fivepence halfpenny *per diem* allowed us; but we were very frequently cheated even of that miserable pittance, and had we not each procured a little cash at Morlaix on our private bills, we should certainly have perished of want. The table was now prepared with a cloth, a rare decency in a common gaol, and in a short time dinner appeared, with two bottles of wine. It consisted of a little fresh fish and a small joint of boiled mutton. The dishes were cleared in a short time, without the smallest hope of a second course. We were anxious to ascertain what the generous good dame could or would demand for this *sumptuous* repast, and inquired of our active waiter, who went to his mistress; and forthwith she very kindly replied, "not to make ourselves uneasy, it would be time enough the next day." We accordingly waited until the next day; but were determined to have nothing more until we knew what we were in debt.

Our fellow-prisoners were particularly polite and attentive to us, and gave us a hint that we were greatly deceived in our opinion of the landlady; which we easily perceived the next morning when we insisted upon hearing how much we had to pay for what she called dinner and wine. She very coolly informed us, fifteen shillings! We imagined

it might have been about seven. However, it was in vain to attempt to explain; we paid the bill, and were resolved to be more circumspect.

At about eleven o'clock some French naval officers came to inspect our people, and gave some of them pieces of money, with an intention to induce them to enter the French service. This I saw, as it was publicly done in the gaol-yard, and I happened to be looking out of the window at the time. I desired them to be particular in what they were about. One man, a Dane (Hendrick Wilson, a very fine fellow, upwards of six feet high, who had been taken by us and had volunteered into our service), replied, "We will take what money they choose to give us, sir, and that shall be all they will gain by coming here."

On the morning of the 14th, about eight o'clock, a guard of cuirassiers rode into the yard. The gaoler was very expeditious in giving us notice that they came to conduct us on our march; so the bills were paid, and everything settled to this man's and his good dame's satisfaction. We were then conducted down into the yard and joined by the people. The gaoler observed to the French officer and cuirassiers that we were *des bons garçons.* This officer appeared to be a very affable, good kind of person, of the true old French school before the character of the inhabitants had been demoralised by the Revolution. He informed us that Mr. Galway, his predecessor, had left him no certificates; but he assured us that with him it should make no difference. All matters being arranged, we commenced our march towards Amiens, where we arrived, after a fatiguing march through the towns of Neufchâtel and Aumâle, on the 16th of March.

Our humane officer was as good as his word. In the small villages between Rouen and Amiens he always took us to an inn and dined with us himself; but in Amiens he could not prevent our being put into the gaol. He, however, came frequently to see us, and remained with us for some time. Understanding that there was an Englishman, a Mr. S. Pratt, who kept an eating-house in this city, we sent to inform him that there were some of his countrymen, prisoners of war in the gaol, who wished to speak to him; but the only answer we received was that he was *busy*. However, he sent Mrs. Pratt, who even shed tears at seeing the distressed condition of her poor, dear countrymen.

This benevolent Christian appeared overpowered by the kindness so natural to her sex, and by a generosity, for the display of which she possessed a peculiar eloquence, she assured us that "if she had it in her power she would give all the seamen shoes and stockings, of which they stood so much in need, and a good dinner—that she would; but, at all events, she would go and instantly get a good dinner for us, poor, dear creatures! for we must be famished." To this she added a great many similar tender expressions.

She took a *cordial leave* of each of us, and said that she would not come again until late in the evening, for fear of her visits being noticed; but she assured us that an excellent dinner should be sent as soon as possible to her poor, dear countrymen. In about an hour we received a small roasted leg of mutton, without any vegetables, with two knives and forks, a little salt in a paper, and two bottles of very inferior wine. We expected to have the opportunity in the evening of expressing to the lady in

person our sense of the excellence of the dinner; but she never came near her "*dear*, dear countrymen!" She took care, however, to send her man with the bill, the charges of which exceeded those of the gaoler's wife at Rouen!

CHAPTER III

Departure from Amiens—Arrival at Albert—Our French officer's delicacy and liberality—A civic feast at Bapaume—Effects of champagne on French aldermen—A separation from our kind conductor—A new escort—A forced march to Cambray—Pitiable state and severe sufferings of the seamen—Entrance into Cambray—Imprisonment—Landrecies, Avesnes, Hirson—A billet upon the inhabitants—Rocroy—A brutal landlord—The robbery and abuse of prisoners—Givet—Charlemont—A description of the fortifications—An escape of prisoners—A fruitless pursuit—Generosity of the French commandant—Private lodgings—A Jacobin landlady—Exhausted funds—The 4th of June—Honours done to King George the Third's birthday—Roast beef and plum pudding—French terrors of insurrection—The difference between taking off and only touching hats in saluting men in authority—Good news—A joyful departure in a cart for Verdun.

At length the destined hour arrived for our leaving this celebrated city and for pursuing our forced and cheerless marches to the place of our imprisonment. Accordingly, at about eight in the morning of the 17th of March, St. Patrick's day, a day of great festivity in my native isle, we were put *en route*, and we arrived at the little town of Albert, in the department of the Somme, at five in the afternoon. Here we were halted for the night. The next morning our kind officer astonished us by a most elegant breakfast, consisting of everything that the small town could supply. We had made it a point never to allow

him to pay any of his personal or table expenses when he conducted us to an inn, and his breakfast was given, I suppose, much to his honour, as a complimentary requital.

From Albert we marched to Bapaume, a small fortified town in the department of Pas de Calais. The inhabitants boast that it has never been taken, even though the Duke of York was so close to it in 1793. The road was excessively dirty and bad. Our men were so exceedingly weak this day, the weather being very severe, and raining so incessantly, that our good officer made some of his cuirassiers take three or four of their prisoners behind on their horses. It was about four in the afternoon when we arrived. The officer took us to a tavern. We, dripping wet, were shown into a spacious apartment, where a large table was laid out, and a number of genteel-looking citizens were sitting round a stove that was fixed in the centre of the room. They did not appear to take the smallest notice of us, nor to make place even for the officer, who was wet to the skin. However, he took the liberty of requesting they would allow him to approach, which they did with seeming reluctance. We now endeavoured to dry ourselves, and get into the best plight we could; having ordered, at the same time, something for dinner, or rather supper, as it was about seven o'clock. We were given to understand that it was the election day for a new mayor, in consequence of which the aldermen and civic officers had ordered a dinner; which being served up, left us in full possession of the stove, a circumstance that pleased us greatly.

Those gentlemen did not, in point of appetite, appear to deviate from their namesakes in a certain great metropolis, although I could not perceive that they had any

turtle soup; champagne appeared to be the only wine they relished. Our supper was placed on a small table near the stove; and those gentlemen, as they became inspired with the generous juice of the grape, condescended to become more familiar with the English prisoners and the officer that had them in charge. They insisted upon our touching glasses, and even on our drinking champagne with them; and in the course of the evening these very people, who, on our arrival, had not vouchsafed to treat us with common civility, or even humanity, became so exceedingly hospitable, cordial, and pressing as to prove an absolute annoyance. They even lavished in their cups a number of encomiums upon the "noble nation" to which we belonged. "What a great pity it is," they cried, "that Englishmen and Frenchmen are not unanimous! They would then carry everything before them, and conquer the whole world."

We were now doomed to suffer a sad mortification and misfortune. The friendly officer who had conducted us from Rouen with so much humanity, and, I may say, delicacy, now informed us that he was superseded, and was no longer to be our guard or escort. He even added that he had applied to be allowed to conduct us to our place of final imprisonment, and, to his mortification, had received a refusal. He appeared very much hurt at the disappointment, and left us for the night with much emotion, assuring us that we should not leave the town without bidding each other farewell.

At daylight, on the 19th of March, a sergeant awakened us, with the unwelcome news that he had brought a guard of dragoons to conduct us to Cambray. We were obliged to get up immediately, and to make the best arrangements

we could for our unpleasant journey. Our old officer and friend, as we considered him, made his appearance. He spoke of us with much warmth of good-nature, and recommended us very strongly to the kind consideration of the sergeant. He then took an affectionate farewell of each individual, and literally shed tears at parting from us. Much did we regret his loss. He was tender-hearted and compassionate, and reflected honour on the nation that gave him birth, and even upon Nature herself. Under this excellent man, with the indulgence he bestowed upon us, and with the confidence he reposed in our honour, not one of us would have taken an advantage of even the most favourable opportunity of escape. Each would have felt it a disgrace to the character of our country, and a proof of an individual badness of heart and insensibility to honour.

At half-past eight o'clock we had to commence our march to Cambray. All the elements seemed to combine with every circumstance to make us feel our altered condition. It was a most severe morning, bitterly cold, and the north-east wind blowing fiercely in our teeth. It hailed and rained violently and without intermission. Our poor crew were half-starved, miserably clad, and without shoes or stockings, and some of them even without shirts. They were in rags and tatters. With starved stomachs and broken spirits, they were forced upon this long march to the cheerless bourn of a gaol. Under the new escort of dragoons we pursued our march to Cambray, where we arrived about four in the afternoon, in a truly pitiable state. We were a mass of dirt and filth, exhausted, and without that alone which can make nature endure extreme difficulties—the prospect of amelioration

or relief. The consciousness of the merits of the past we had, but of prospects of the future we were miserably destitute.

In this state we were marched through Cambray, the gaze of the people, who rejoiced to see a procession of English captives. They felt an extraordinary exultation at witnessing prisoners of a country that had been so proud and so triumphant. After passing this ordeal we were lodged in the citadel.

If in the first part of the captivity I and my companions had been degraded and subjected to hardships as private seamen, here I had my retribution, for we were all four now called captains; and, in virtue or honour of our rank, we were, *pro tempore*, allowed accommodation in the canteen. This was, in fact, an increase of misery, for our poor seamen were put into the dungeons, or *souterrains*.

It was only by our strenuous exertions that we could procure for the poor fellows some fresh straw, for which we paid an exorbitant price, for their miserable repose. In this straw they enjoyed what warmth they could, making it into ropes, and twisting it round their exhausted limbs and bodies, after refreshing themselves with a sort of soup which we provided for them, and paid for also dearly. This was what the French called *soupe grasse*, and was made in the following manner :—They fill a large pot, or *marmite*, with water. When it begins to boil, they throw one or two handfuls of salt into it, according to the quantity of water, chop up some cabbage or herbs, which they also put in, and, last of all, a ball of hog's lard, kitchen-stuff, dripping, or any other grease they may have. They then allow it to boil until the

materials are well done. It is afterwards served up in soup-plates or dishes, into which has been previously put bread, cut into very thin slices. The charge is twopence, and sometimes more, for each plateful. I saw our landlady at Seéz, a village near Rouen, after she had cooked us some beef-steaks, put all the gravy into the pan, fill it up with water, and after she had kept the pan boiling for some minutes, pour the whole contents into a large pot of water which she had boiling on the fire, previously prepared with salt and herbs: this she served out as soup to our poor seamen, at a most exorbitant price.

We remained at Cambray until the 21st, when a severe frost, with snow, set in; and we had to march, with the wind and snow and hail at intervals right in our faces, to Landrecies, at a distance of nearly six British leagues. Our people were there put into the gaol, and we were allowed the *honour* of stopping at the Palais National tavern. They were very fair here in their demands. At daylight, on the 22nd, we commenced our route to Avesnes, in the Pays-Bas, where we arrived at about four. They put us all indiscriminately into the town gaol. About five the town major came to speak with us, and obtained us permission to go to a certain inn, which he pointed out, and where we were egregiously imposed on. The men were left in the gaol. The 23rd we had another guard of dragoons, under the command of a sergeant, to escort us to our depot. At about three we arrived at a poor little village called Hirson, where, having no gaol, they billeted both ourselves and the seamen upon the inhabitants. I and my companions were quartered at a collar-maker's house. The poor people were extremely civil, and provided

us with tolerably good beds. We paid them for every necessary with which they supplied us.

The next morning (the 24th) we had to take our leave of the collar-maker and his family, and were put upon our march to the village of Maubert Fontaine, which was by far more poor and miserable than even Hirson. Here we were again billeted upon the inhabitants; and quarters in private houses were so preferable to confinement in a gaol that the difference easily reconciled us to the smallness of the town. The people with whom we were placed were very great impostors, and extorted double prices for everything with which they supplied us.

On the next morning (the 25th), however, we parted from these unfeeling knaves, and were put upon our march to Rocroy, in the Ardennes. The distance was short, and we arrived early; and our people were immediately put into the common gaol. My companions and I exerted all the interest and rhetoric that we could muster to be allowed, as officers, to go to an inn; and the request at last was conceded. Here we rested twenty-four hours, and had the misfortune to find our landlord a most consummate scoundrel, who took advantage of every opportunity—or, rather, made opportunities—both to defraud and insult us. The next morning, at our departure, he presented us with an account of a sum-total or gross amount of his demand, without condescending to specify a single item in detail. We expostulated with him upon the nature of his bill and upon its enormous amount, and wished to know how he could possibly make it so great; for, in fact, we had been particularly economical, as our funds were getting very low. The impostor flatly refused any explanation whatever, but peremptorily insisted upon immediate payment,

bestowing upon us insulting and provoking epithets, in numbers and of a character that brought conviction to our minds that he had no ordinary talents for this species of assault and battery. We were obliged to submit to all his furious and disgusting abuse; and, what in our situation was still worse, we were compelled to pay the bill, or rather the no bill, for it was an extortion without a bill. To the great disgrace of the French military character, I must repeat that in no instance did the officer in charge of us protect us from these gross impositions, which were rendered more shameful and cruel from our helpless condition.

The demand being satisfied, and the torrent of abuse digested with as little bile as possible, we took our leave of Rocroy; and, turning our backs upon our host, the dragoons put us upon our march on the road to the little village of Fumez, on the Meuse, so famous for its slate quarries, where we arrived early in the day, and were all of us billeted upon the inhabitants, whom we found extremely civil and obliging.

We were now but one stage from Givet, with its citadel of Charlemont, and at eight o'clock the next morning, the 28th of March, we commenced our last day's journey.

At three in the afternoon we entered Givet, or Charlemont, our place of destination, and thus did we terminate our distressing march from Brest, a distance, by the *détour* we had gone, of nearly 700 miles, performed in thirty-nine days, including resting-days, through inclement weather, bad roads, and under every circumstance calculated to destroy life, or to embitter it whilst it lasted.

Givet is a fortified town in the department of Ardennes and bishopric of Liège, divided by the Meuse. That portion on the south side of the river is called Little Givet.

This town is commanded by a very strong fort and citadel (Charlemont), built upon an immense rock: the fortifications were constructed by Vauban. A communication between Great and Little Givet is kept up by means of a pontoon bridge: the centre boats are placed so as to be hauled out occasionally to admit vessels to pass up and down, which frequently happens. The people appeared very much disposed to be friendly with us; but we were kept so very close and strict that it was impossible to form any acquaintance. Every necessary of life is cheap in this town: their beer is tolerably good. Wine is rather dear, as there are very few vineyards in the neighbourhood.

Our prisoners at the commencement were confined in this place; but when they became numerous they were moved down to the horse-barracks, from a dread, I suppose, of their revolting some day and taking possession of citadel, town, and all. Had they once possession of one, the other would be entirely at their mercy and disposal. During our stay at this depot, four of the seamen escaped from their prison, two of whom belonged to our late frigate. On their being missed the following morning, parties of *gendarmes* on horseback were despatched by the commandant to search for them in all directions, with strict orders to mutilate, and, in fact, *not to bring them back alive;* "that it might prove an example" (using his own expression) "to the rest of the prisoners." However, fortunately for those poor fellows, they escaped their pursuers—at least for that time. They were afterwards taken at Dunkirk as they were about to embark in an open boat. The commandant was also frequently in the habit of riding into the prison-yard, and taking his pistols out of the holsters, examining

the priming in order to terrify us. This he did generally in the evening, and the prisoners could not refrain from laughing at such foolish conduct.

Upon our arrival here, we found, as prisoners of war, the crews of the *Minerve* and the *Shannon*, frigates that had been commanded by Captains Jahleel Brenton and Gower, who, with their officers, were at Verdun. There were also in confinement a number of English seamen that had been captured in merchant vessels. We were immediately visited by a Mr. Bradshaw, one of Captain Brenton's clerks, sent here by him, who was permitted to reside in the town, in order that he might act as that officer's commissary.[1] Mr. Bradshaw introduced me and my companions to Captain Petervin, of the *gendarmerie*, who was commandant of the prisoners of war. A Jersey man, named Goree, was employed as interpreter, and he explained to Captain Petervin our rank in the English service; but the captain, though unwilling to put us under close imprisonment, seemed at a loss what to do with us, as we had been sent to him as private seamen. He hesitated, and for a long time remained undecided; but at last he consented that we might go to La Tête de Cerf tavern that night. To La Tête de Cerf we joyfully proceeded with Mr. Bradshaw, after giving Monsieur le Commandant a thousand thanks for his condescension. We found that we had been sent to a very decent tavern, the first in the town, which convinced us that the captain of the *gendarmerie* entertained a favourable opinion of the

[1] In Sir Jahleel Brenton's interesting *Autobiography* the reader may find a long account of the misery prevalent among the British prisoners at Givet, and of the efforts which he took to get their grievances redressed.

English *adjutants*. We justified his acuteness by ordering a good dinner. Mr. Bradshaw dined with us, and exhilarated our drooping spirits by assurances that the commandant would be induced to permit us to lodge in the town. We ordered an additional bottle of wine on the strength of this good news, and passed the evening as cheerfully as possible under the recollection of past sufferings, and with the dismal prospect of a long imprisonment, apart from the glorious services which our profession was then rendering to our country.

The next day the commandant received us with the politeness for which his countrymen had at one time been so proverbial. We explained through our interpreter the excessive injustice and cruelty of being sent to the seamen's depot, and treated differently from our brother officers. He sympathised with us in all we said, assuring us that he would send off a despatch to General Wirion at Verdun (who was commander-in-chief over the British prisoners) and state the case to him. At the same time, he advised us to write to our commanding officer, and promised to have our letter forwarded. He desired us to remain quietly at our tavern, and assured us that he would do everything in his power to alleviate our distresses. We gave him our best thanks, took our leave, and returned to the Tête de Cerf.

Upon an overhauling of our finances, we had the mortification to find that we could not remain many days at a tavern, not having a farthing allowed us for our subsistence; the fivepence halfpenny *per diem* ending at the moment we arrived at the depot. Mr. Bradshaw could not render us any pecuniary assistance without Captain Brenton's permission; consequently our situation was

becoming every moment worse and worse. As lodgings, we were informed, were excessively cheap in the town, we concluded that we had better apply to the commandant for leave to hire a couple of rooms, with cooking utensils, etc., than continue any longer as we were. However, we dreaded that he might order us into the barracks with the seamen if we began so early to demand favours. We therefore agreed to be extremely economical and to wait a few days longer. Those days being expired, we made the intended application, and with success. He approved of our plan, and gave us a written permission to walk about the town. This he did entirely upon his own responsibility, and assured us that he relied upon our honour not to go without the limits of the town; adding that if we abused this indulgence we would be severely punished. We declared our intentions were not to cause him the smallest trouble or uneasiness, and we were particular in the observance of our promise.

The same day we hired two rooms at Madame de Garde's, the widow of a *ci-devant* general. She provided us with two beds for us four, cooking utensils, and everything necessary for housekeeping, and at a very moderate price. We acquainted Mons. le Commandant of our success, who congratulated us, but, at the same time, appeared sorry that we lodged with this old lady, observing that she was *une Jacobine*, and of the *old school.* All persons at this time who were known to be attached to the English were reprobated as Jacobins; and I need not say that we liked the old dame the better for this information, though we took care to disguise our feelings and to conceal the fact. Our *ménage* commenced the following morning. We took the daily cooking and different duties by rotation; but were

soon able to get rid of these unpleasant services, for we procured permission for an infirm old man named Allen, who had been our captain's steward, to live with us as our cook and servant. Our dishes were certainly not very varied or exquisite: soup and *bouilli*, with vegetables, constituted our daily fare; and even this, we apprehended, would soon be beyond our rapidly decreasing finances.

All April and May had dismally passed and no answers to our letters had been received from Verdun. Our rent was in arrear, and our purses at the point of exhaustion. We solicited Mr. Bradshaw to grant us the sailor's allowance of a pound of meat each *per diem;* but even this he could not do without the authority of Captain Brenton. This, however, was received from Verdun by return of post. The pound of meat proved of very material service to the poor *adjutants*, and they were most thankful to their humane chief, Captain Brenton.

At length arrived the glorious 4th of June, the birthday of our sovereign, George the Third; and for this one day at least were our sufferings forgotten and our sorrows cast to the wind. We were resolved, if possible, to make some demonstration in honour of the day; and at last, low as were our pecuniary circumstances, we did contrive to give a birthday dinner to the commandant and to the paymaster of the depot. From this latter officer, whose name was Payne, we had received many civilities.

The day altogether passed off very agreeably until about sunset, when the time arrived for locking the seamen up in the different wards of the gaol. They now gave three tremendous cheers, which flowed from the heart, in commemoration of the day that gave birth to their gracious sovereign; and, as the last cheer stunned and terrified the

astounded Frenchmen, they hauled in the colours of different nations that they had kept all day streaming out of each window, taking care to have the French tri-coloured flag under all, which was never noticed by either commandant or guards. The enthusiastic cheers of nearly a thousand men made a most powerful noise: it was music to our ears as we sat at table, our lodgings being contiguous. The commandant, who was greatly alarmed, imagined that the seamen had revolted and had actually got out of prison: so great was this officer's hurry that he made but one step from the top of the stairs to the bottom. We had some little trouble in getting him on his legs again, and were greatly rejoiced in finding that he had received no injury from this step, or rather fall—assuring him there was no foundation whatever for his fears. However, he would be convinced in person: he therefore went to the prison, and was rejoiced to find everything perfectly tranquil.

Being returned, he observed that the English were *des braves gens*, and he would drink another glass of wine in commemoration of King George's birthday. The national dish, roast beef with plum pudding, which we had made ourselves, was not forgotten upon this occasion. *Monsieur* liked the well-done or outside part of the former extremely; but the latter neither of our guests would touch for a long time. At last, by dint of persuasion, they condescended to taste it; and so sudden was the transition made upon them by that taste that we had some pains to secure ourselves a part, though it was a pretty sizable pudding. They exclaimed as they gulped it down, "*Sacré bleu, comme il est bon!*"—"*Ma foi, oui!*" repeated each alternately. We felt highly pleased at the sight, and laughed heartily.

At a late hour, or rather, in regard to the morning, an early one, *Messieurs* took their leave, evidently in great spirits, and we retired to rest.

Since our arrival at this depot, several of the stoutest and apparently most healthy of our men had died of a fever supposed to have been caught in some of the gaols on the road. Our poor servant, Allen, was seized with it, and expired in a few days. With respect to comforts, our prisoners were badly off; but the French medical officers at Givet were certainly humane and attentive.

In the latter part of June, to our surprise and chagrin, the commandant appeared much altered in his manner towards us. We were unable to imagine what could be the cause of so sudden and total a change. Mr. Bradshaw, however, informed us that he had observed to him, "that the English officers" (as he was kind enough to style us) "were excessively proud."

"I never meet them," said he, "but I take my hat off, whilst they only lift theirs to me."

Certain it is, that, with all mankind, a slight or insult, real or imaginary, intended or casual, produces more rancour than an injury. By the accidental hurry or carelessness of using a wafer instead of sealing-wax to a letter, the Prime Minister of England, at a crisis of the country, for a time lost the support of one of the wealthiest and most influential dukes of the political world.

But our commandant's anger was not soon appeased. He one night sent a guard of *gendarmes* to take us from our lodgings to the guard-house, for being in the streets after nine o'clock, when it was scarcely dark at that time of the year, and although we had no regular time prescribed by him to be indoors. In the guard-house we remained, on

a cold pavement, all night, at a loss to know of what we had been guilty. Our guards assured us that it was merely the caprice of the commandant. At noon Mr. Bradshaw visited us, but without affording any hopes of release. The commandant had informed him that we were confined for not answering a sentinel on his post who had hailed or challenged us. This we positively denied, as we had not passed a single sentinel that night. Monsieur Brasseur, the second in command, then came to visit us, and expressed great sorrow at seeing us thus confined without any cause. He waited on the commandant, became responsible for our conduct, and had us removed to our lodgings, where we were commanded to confine ourselves until "further orders."

Our excellent landlady received us with the greatest joy imaginable, bathed us with her tears, and had refreshments ready for us, though she had sent us a very good breakfast to the guard-house, and was herself very poor. In three days we were once more liberated; but henceforth we were always confined whenever a religious procession or public ceremony took place, and which at this particular time was very frequent. Our chief amusement was a game at billiards, and a walk round the ramparts, or rather ruins. We frequently met with military officers at the billiard-table, who always behaved with the strictest politeness, and made us an offer of the table the moment we entered the room, which, of course, we declined until they had finished.

From the commandant's conduct of late, we were constantly under apprehensions of being closely confined with the sailors: he appeared more inveterate against me than any of the rest. However, about the 10th or 12th of

July we received a letter from our commanding officer at Verdun, stating that General Wirion had at last sent an order for Mr. Mahoney and myself to be conducted to the Verdun depot. The commandant received the order by the same post. Mr. Bradshaw had also a letter from Captain Brenton, who had kindly and considerately directed him to supply us with cash to enable us to proceed. All this intelligence arriving at the same time, nearly overwhelmed us with joy; but the two other poor fellows that were to remain—the boatswain and gunner—were not only disconsolate at the inequality of their fate, but full of apprehensions that as soon as we had left them the offended commandant would become both more mean and cruel in his severity.

At last, on the 16th of July, we were to leave Givet for Verdun. Mr. Mahoney had a bad foot, and a cart was therefore provided, in which I had the privilege of riding. Everything was at length settled for our departure, and we had previously been permitted to see our ship's company—a pleasure of which we had been deprived for some weeks. This scene was sadly interesting, and we left the brave fellows with reciprocal good wishes. We took an affectionate farewell of our two shipmates and of our good landlady, and began our route to Verdun, under the escort of two *gendarmes*.

CHAPTER IV

Our arrival at Verdun—A joyful reception—General Wirion—His indulgence towards the prisoners—The meetings of old shipmates and friends—Mental employment the best antidote against *ennui* and dissipation—Restiveness at confinement—Anxiety to be again in the active service of Old England—Meditations upon an escape—Contrivances to avoid a breach of parole or any breach of honour—Three comrades, or *compagnons de voyage*—Scaling ramparts—A descent of seventy-two feet—The open country—The march commences—Flying by night, and hiding in woods by day—Heavy rains, dismal roads, and swampy beds, with bad fare and good hearts—Leaping a moat—A dislocated knee—The march resumed, and pursued lamely—The town of Neuville—Extreme sufferings from thirst—Water at length procured, anguish allayed, and the escape proceeded upon with renewed spirits.

On the 16th of July 1804 we arrived early at Fumez. Here an old woman doing the duty of crier attracted my notice. At a corner of one of the streets she began her preamble. She had a small bar of iron in one hand and a large key in the other, as a substitute for a bell. We were allowed to do as we pleased on our arrival, and to go to any inn we liked. Our guard informed us that the commandant of Givet had inserted in our *feuille de route* that we should be considered as officers on parole and be treated accordingly.

From Fumez we were marched to Mezières, and put up at a tavern, being now officers of rank, which our landlady

appeared to have been informed of. This old lady was, if possible, more extortionate than any we had yet met with. We found that, unless we previously made an agreement, particularly specifying what we wished, and regulating the price of every article, we should be liable to the greatest imposition; and this, indeed, is pretty generally the case throughout France. From Mezières we passed through Sedan, Stenay, and a small village, Sivry; and on the 23rd arrived at Verdun, the long-wished-for place of our ultimate destination.

We were received by Captain Brenton, our officers, and countrymen in the most joyful and cordial manner. For two nights, until we could procure lodgings, we were billeted at the inn Les Trois Maures, at which the Emperor Napoleon put up on his return after his splendid campaign in Germany and the Treaty of Tilsit. Two or three days after our arrival, Mr. Pridham introduced us to General Wirion, who gave us permission to walk in the suburbs, provided our commanding officer became responsible for our conduct, *corps pour corps;* which Lieutenant Pridham had done. In the course of a few days I procured lodgings, recently vacated by a *détenu*, Sir James de Bathe, with Mr. Ashworth, a midshipman, who had been one of my messmates in our late ship, the *Hussar*. He afterwards died at Minorca, in consequence of wounds he had received off Tarragona, when a lieutenant of H.M.S. *Centaur*, while in the act of snatching from destruction the unfortunate Spaniards who were being sabred by the French cavalry when rushing into the sea to our boats for protection.[1]

[1] He died at Port Mahon on the 25th of July 1811, having been mortally wounded on 28th June, the day of the storming of Tarragona by Marshal Suchet.

As soon as I found myself a little settled, in conjunction with my much-esteemed friend Ashworth I employed a French master, and pursued my studies with the utmost assiduity. I never left the town, except occasionally on race-days or days of other public amusements. It should be remarked that races, and all species of amusements that can deprive an Englishman of his property, or divert his attention for a moment, were allowed by the general who commanded the prisoners. I have been informed that there were fixed prices for all these indulgences. The hazard-table and *rouge et noir* have been the destruction of many of our countrymen. Every kind of debauchery and libertinism, I am sorry to add, was permitted and practised in this town. Latterly, from the principal people of fashion and men of property being dispersed, horse-racing ceased, and gambling also, in a great degree.

We likewise engaged a fencing-master, and, as soon as we were tolerably advanced in the French language, we procured an Italian master, and applied ourselves to study under him with the greatest diligence. These literary pursuits were of incalculable advantage to us; for, whilst they strengthened the mind, and spread over it the charms inseparable from the acquisition of useful knowledge, they fortified us against the allurements of dissipation, lightened the weight of our captivity, and saved us from that moral disease *ennui*, with all its train of passions and disordered appetites which people are prone to inflict upon themselves by an indulgence in habits of idleness. We were stimulated in our zeal for our studies by reflecting that we were acquiring that which would make us more useful to our country in our profession. However, what we witnessed and what we experienced convinced us of the inestimable

benefits of mental pursuits in mitigating the sufferings of captivity, as well as of the extent to which those sufferings are aggravated by a want of intellectual employment.

In a few months after my arrival, a Mr. M'Grath, a relation of mine, was escorted to this depot, with Mr. Wills, master's mate, and a boat's crew of the frigate *Acasta*. Mr. M'Grath was surgeon's assistant. They had been made prisoners on the island of Beniget, near Brest. Mr. Wills had been ordered early in the morning to land on that island and load his boat with sand for scouring the decks; and Mr. M'Grath had received permission to accompany him, merely for the purpose of taking a walk and amusing himself while the men were loading the boat; but they had no sooner landed than they were surrounded by a number of French troops that were lying in ambush for them, and had been disembarked the night before for the express purpose of surprising some of the English boats which were daily in the habit of coming on shore. Our poor fellows were immediately secured, embarked, and conducted to the Continent. From the cruel treatment which they experienced on their march, they were so exhausted on their arrival at Verdun that both the officers were seized with a violent fever. Mr. Thos. George Wills, an excellent officer, now a post-captain, recovered in a short time; but his companion lost the use of his limbs, and was confined to his bed, with little or no intermission, until July 1808, when he burst a blood-vessel and expired without a groan. He lived with me the greater part of that time.

But to return to the thread of my own narrative. We continued at Verdun from July 1804, amusing ourselves by study, and in the winter by skating, etc., until August

1807, when I began to consider my situation minutely and to deliberate upon my unfortunate captivity. Those deliberations had the effect of making me very uncomfortable and dissatisfied; nor could I afterwards reconcile myself to study or to any amusement whatever. I reasoned with myself that I was losing the prime of my youth in captivity. I saw no prospect of peace or an exchange of prisoners; no hope or possibility of being promoted in my present state, nor of recommending myself, through any personal exertions, to the notice of the Admiralty. I was deprived, while in France, of being able to afford my country, my friends, or myself the least assistance. The youthful visions of the glories of the naval service again came over me; but sadly were my spirits broken when I reflected that my hopes of joining others in the strife of honour and patriotism were destroyed, unless I could rescue myself from bondage.

In this horrible state, almost of stupefaction, I remained for some days; when my poor friend Ashworth observed to me, that he and Mr. Tuthill, a particular friend, a midshipman also, had been canvassing the cruelty and hardships they laboured under, and had, in consequence, formed the intention, if I would join them, of transgressing, and getting deprived of their permission to go out of town (what the French deemed *parole*), and making their escape to their native country. This was to me the most flattering intelligence—it was what I had been revolving in my brain for some days. We accordingly met at an appointed place to deliberate on the best method of putting in execution the exploit we were about to commence, and agreed that it was necessary to procure knapsacks, provisions, bladders to contain water, etc., prior to

our getting closely confined, as we should be under the necessity of travelling by night, and of concealing ourselves in the woods during the daytime.

Having, therefore, provided all the requisite materials—viz., files, gimlets, saws, and other articles which are needless to mention,—that, in case of being taken, we might be able to break our fetters and escape from the slavery and punishment we were well aware would await us; and Mr. Ashworth and I having waited upon Lieutenant Pridham, to request he would withdraw his responsibility for us, which he accordingly did,—we commenced by missing one *appel;* but, to our great astonishment, this breach of conduct was overlooked and forgiven.[1] We next remained out of town very late. This was also forgiven, though we even got into the guard-house. In short, it was several days before we succeeded in being deprived of our passports, or "permissions"; and we suspected, or rather felt confident, from the lenity shown to us, that our design of escape was suspected. Our personal honour, as well as that of the navy,—and, indeed, of the English nation in general,—had precluded the possibility of our attempting to escape whilst we were upon what was deemed, by the French commandant, *parole;* but now we were literally under close confinement; and with the reflection that, perhaps, so favourable an opportunity of getting away might never again be afforded to us, we were not slow in forming our resolutions.

It was on the night of the 28th of August 1807 that

[1] They made midshipmen, notwithstanding their officers were responsible for them, attend two *appels,* or musters, *per diem;* the not appearing at the exact time was formerly a fine of three livres (2s. 6d.), but afterwards the offenders were sent to Sarrelouis or Bitche, the depots of punishment.

we determined to take French-leave of our "prison-house"; and we had provided an excellent rope to enable us to scale the ramparts. Each had procured his portion, or quantum, of between three and four fathoms; but that which Tuthill had obtained was merely thumb-line. This, of course, was tailed on, or put at the bottom of the rope, in order that if it gave way we should have the less distance to fall.

It may be imagined that our hearts beat high with conflicting emotions. That great sufferings were to be endured, and great dangers encountered, but little interested spirits so young and ardent as ours; or they were rather overwhelmed by that love of daring and honourable enterprise which often stimulates youth as well as manhood to the greatest and best exertions. On one side we had to reflect upon the mortification of capture, with an increased severity, and, what to us seemed infinitely worse, a prolonged duration of confinement; whilst, on the other, should success crown our determined efforts, our hearts thrilled with the thoughts of once more walking the deck of a British ship-of-war, in all the elation of a confidence that we were serving our king and our country in a righteous cause.

I returned to my lodgings; but it is necessary for me to observe that on my way I happened to meet with a friend, a Lieutenant Essel of the navy, who, with the greatest frankness, communicated to me that he had come to a resolution to attempt his escape from France, and he expressed how much he wished that I would accompany him. This singular coincidence naturally excited in my mind a suspicion that he had arrived at a knowledge of our secret, and I declined giving him a direct answer for

the present; but I reflected that as he did not mention either of my companions, it was a proof that he did not know of our design, or that he exercised a prudence which might render him worthy of confidence. I quitted him, repaired to my comrades, and communicated to them all that had passed. After a consultation, upon a point to us so momentous, we agreed that he might join our perilous expedition, provided that he was not in debt, and that he could otherwise escape from the town without dishonour. Very high feelings and scrupulous notions of honour pervaded our naval officers. Our new comrade satisfied us upon all these points. He assured us that he had been deprived of his passport, or "permission"; that he had settled all his affairs; and that he had a surplus of £50 to join with our funds in meeting the difficulties we were but too sure to encounter. Under these circumstances we all cordially shook hands; and never did four young adventurers attempt an exploit under a more friendly and gallant resolution to share a common fate.

The time so long expected arrived; and at the hour before midnight we met at the appointed spot. How much were we chagrined and vexed to find that not only at this late hour were the sentinels unusually on the alert, but that—what seemed more extraordinary—great numbers of people were passing to and fro. We were obliged to defer our escape to the night following.

I confess I felt the greatest regret at quitting my poor sick relative, our only other comrade, M'Grath; nor could I make him acquainted with the step I was about to take without experiencing an emotion impossible to be described. His feelings at our separation were as acute as my own.

The sea-coast, of course, was the point fixed upon for our destination; and we agreed that about Étaples was the most likely part to procure a boat.

The anxiety and uneasiness which we felt the next day were beyond description. Some of our countrymen who called to see us, *en passant*, threw out such insinuations, and made such remarks upon our conduct of late, that we were under the most serious apprehensions of being shackled, and on the road to Bitche, before the much-desired hour, eleven at night. "The ——," says Shakespeare, "fears each bush an officer." We were well aware that there were several Englishmen employed and paid regularly for conveying the most trivial occurrence that might take place amongst the prisoners to the French general. I have frequently known prisoners of war, through malice, to be taken out of their beds in the night, fettered, and conducted, under an escort of *gendarmes*, to the depots of punishment, without ever being informed of the crime or fault of which they had been accused; and merely from some of those miscreants giving false information, in order to be revenged for any private animosity they might have had against the person so treated.

The long-wished-for moment at length arrived: the intermediate time had passed in great excitement. We met. Everything seemed quiet, and favourable to our escape. We were in the spirit to take every advantage of circumstances, or to create circumstances, if creating them were possible. In a few seconds, by the aid of our rope, and by the assistance of a friend, Alexander Donaldson, many years back my shipmate, a master in the navy, and afterwards a prisoner of war,—he was a

native of Portsoy, in Banffshire, but is now no more,—we got down these most formidable ramparts of between seventy and eighty feet high. We descended, to our surprise, with little damage, except the loss of some of the skin from my hands. This was caused by the whip-cord part of the line, which we were not able to grasp firmly, and it brought my companions altogether on my back and shoulders, in the ditch, before I could move or extricate myself. Happy were we to find ourselves, so far at least, at liberty. Our course was N.W. Each man buckled on his knapsack, arranged his implements and weapons of defence, and, full of the spirit of determined adventure and of resolute suffering, we started upon our course.

The next morning, the 30th August 1807, at about three o'clock the day began to dawn, and as we had run during most of the time since we had quitted our miserable imprisonment, we conjectured that we were at least five British leagues from Verdun. We determined not to approach any houses, nor to expose ourselves during the daytime, except in a case of the greatest necessity.

We were, fortunately, close to the very wood which we had pricked off upon our map for our first halt: it was in the vicinity of Varennes, where Louis XVI., his queen, sister, and two children were arrested in their flight from the Tuileries in 1791, and were conducted back to Paris. We instantly entered this wood, and, after a long search, we succeeded in finding a thick part, though, unfortunately, it was contiguous to a footpath. However, we hid ourselves so well, that, unless information had been spread of our flight, and people came purposely in search of us, we had no apprehension of being discovered. In this our lair

we lay with tolerable comfort and security, until about nine o'clock, when our confidence vanished, and we were greatly annoyed; for we found the pathway to be much frequented, and the voices of passengers, and of children who came to enjoy their Sunday morning in nutting and sporting in the wood, greatly distressed the whole of us. Fortunately none of the nut-trees or bushes were very close to us, and at noon we had the happiness of seeing the intruders hurry home to their dinners. We likewise took our refreshments, and thought it wise to destroy our hats, and to supply their places with white beaver caps, à *la Française*, with which we had provided ourselves.

At seven in the evening it was tolerably dusk, and, having shouldered our knapsacks and made all other arrangements, we left the wood, and recommenced our march, making a direct N.W. course through the country, over hill and dale, mountain and plain; traversing ploughed fields, wading through bogs and marshes, leaping ditches, and clearing all enclosures with a buoyancy of spirit that gave us astonishing strength and vigour: nothing could intercept or retard our progress. The happiness we felt was inexpressible. The freshness of the open air, the active use of our unconfined limbs, and the hope of ultimate triumph and liberty, made us consider ourselves as regenerated creatures.

But before daylight (on 31st August) it began to rain heavily. We discovered a wood convenient for our concealment, except that it was contiguous to a farmhouse. After much of anxious deliberation, we resolved, however, to secrete ourselves in it; for we reflected that it might not be possible for us to reach another, before daylight might betray us to the stirring peasantry, compared to

which any less chance of danger was preferable. I at this moment perfectly recollect the spot in which we placed ourselves, and even at this distance of time I seem to behold all that passed around us.

We provided ourselves, after a long search—the wood being excessively thin—with a tolerably good sort of hiding-place; but we could distinctly hear the people in the farmyard conversing, which, I need scarcely say, caused us great alarm. Our situation all this day was very deplorable. On entering our hiding-place we were wet to the skin, and it continued raining without ceasing until late in the evening: the wet we received from the branches and leaves was much worse than if we had been in an open field without a tree. Our chief employment was squeezing the water out of our clothes and stockings. Our store of provisions, which principally consisted of light biscuits and sausages, was very much damaged. At dusk, about the usual hour—seven,—after taking a little refreshment, we bundled on our knapsacks and accoutrements, and proceeded on the old course, N.W. We walked a good distance this night, the weather being more favourable.

Just before daylight on the next morning (1st Sept.) we entered a most excellent thick wood, admirably well calculated for night-walkers. We took some refreshment, and endeavoured to sleep a little after the fatigues of the night, and after congratulating one another at being thus far successful. At about ten we were alarmed by the voices of people apparently close to us. We found that they were passing on an adjacent pathway, which we had not before perceived; but we were too well placed to be under any dread of being discovered. The number of squirrels, rats, mice, and vermin about us this day was

very great. Having made our customary preparations, at seven we got out of our lurking-hole, and proceeded to the border of the wood, on the side towards which we had to direct our course. On our arrival we discovered some labourers still at work in a field close to the outside of the wood, which obliged us to halt until they disappeared. We then proceeded with some anxiety, as we saw a village exactly in our track, and which we could not avoid without making a very great circuit. In about two hours after we had quitted the wood we found our course suddenly impeded by a ditch or moat, and, upon sounding it with our clubs (which, by the bye, were of a tolerably good length), we found it very deep; in fact, its depth by far exceeded anything we could have anticipated. We surveyed this formidable obstruction or barrier, marching first in one direction, and then in another, without being able to come to any resolution, although we all knew and felt that, by some means or other, cross it we must, or submit to be recaptured.

At length I discovered one part which was, or seemed to be, narrower than the rest, and in this case of no alternative, which was becoming more desperate every minute, I resolved to make one great effort and to try to leap over. I accordingly gave myself space for a good run opposite the narrowest spot, and, leaping with all my force, I landed on the opposite bank some feet beyond the margin. The channel turned out not to be so broad as it had appeared, and, knowing that it was exceedingly deep, I had been the more anxious to secure a good landing, lest I should fall back into the stream. The event, however, was like escaping from Scylla to be lost in Charybdis —or rather the reverse; for, in avoiding the water, I

had to find my injury on the land. The consequence of the great impetus I had given to my leap was, that, the opposite bank being gravelly and hard, and my knapsack lifting and coming down with a sudden jerk immediately my feet touched the ground, I was thrown on my side, and my right knee was twisted in the joint to such a degree that I absolutely thought it was snapped in two.

In this condition I remained extended on the ground; and, whilst in the most excruciating pain, I kept cautioning my companions to be more careful and to guide themselves by my experience. They at last effected the leap, and joined me without injury or inconvenience. They examined the joint, and found, to my inexpressible joy, that the knee was not broken; but so unfortunate an accident, at such a critical moment, deprived me of every hope of being able to prosecute the long and difficult journey that we had to accomplish. These reflections distressed me to such a degree that my ideas became distracted. I could not, of course, expect my comrades to remain with me; and I had the wretched prospect of being abandoned by them, and left either to suffer and perish in the open field, or to be captured, and my recovery to be succeeded by the gaol. Instant death I thought by far preferable; but Divine Providence deigned to interpose its clemency, and taught me the useful lesson—to prefer to despair a confidence in its wisdom and mercy.

My comrades paid every attention to my injury. They chafed the joint, and rubbed it with the small portion of spirits with which each of us was provided. I found great relief from this application, and in a short time, with their assistance, I was able to get up and put my foot to the ground.

I made an effort to step out, but was under the necessity of requesting that one would assist me on each side, which they did. Thus we moved on slowly, and passed the village about which we had been so anxious. My knee, I was happy to feel, was gradually getting better; and we managed to proceed in this state about three leagues, when we discovered a very fine, commodious wood.

It was about two o'clock on the 2nd, when my comrades proposed that we should rest in this wood during the ensuing day: they would not, on my account, proceed farther. No determination could be more congenial to my feelings than this. I was excessively dejected and fatigued. Having, at length, found a proper part of the wood, each took his position and enjoyed a little refreshment, and then endeavoured to take rest; but so violently did my knee pain me that I was obliged to have two of my friends lying with their whole weight on my leg, thigh, and right side. They fell fast asleep in a very short time, yet I could not close an eye. The distressing and melancholy reflection of being left behind, in consequence of my illness, still recurred. The thought of being picked up and conducted to some dreadful dungeon, or some other ignominious habitation, was constantly present; and while agitated with such ideas, what mortal could think of sleeping? Thus occupied in thought, wavering between hope and despair, I remained nearly two hours, my friends in a sound sleep the whole time. At last, finding their weight on my side troublesome, I extricated myself from them without awaking them or causing them the least disturbance.

I now imagined that I had an excellent opportunity of

trying whether I could rise and walk by myself, and I accordingly made an effort to stand, which I accomplished with some difficulty; but on attempting to walk, so great was the pain, and so excessive the weakness of the knee, that I immediately fell backwards on the earth. The necessity of proceeding was so urgent that during the ensuing day I availed myself of the opportunity of my companions being asleep to repeat the experiment, but with no better success. In order, however, to encourage my kind and brave associates, I kept answering all their inquiries with assurances that I felt much better.

At the usual hour of the evening, all arrangements being made for pursuing our march, we stole to the edge of the wood, which I never expected to be able to leave. I was supported by a friend on each side, as I had been the night before, and most burdensome must I have been to them. On arriving at the outskirts, we found it too early to leave the wood. There was a very high tree at the point to which we came, and it was proposed that Mr. Tuthill should climb up it to discover the nature of the country that lay before us in our course. This he immediately did in good style, being intrepid and active; and, to our great satisfaction, reported it to be a beautiful plain, without wood, river, or anything to impede our progress. From the excessive height of the tree, we had no doubt that he could extend his view over several leagues.

We at length proceeded, and I insisted that my friends should leave me in the rear, to hobble on and struggle for myself. I felt, I confess, extremely dejected, but was determined not to expose my feelings. At first the pain I endured was terrible; however, confident that there was

no fracture, though with excruciating agony, I at length firmly brought my leg to the ground, and contrived to limp with the assistance of my club. We had not advanced above a league when we perceived a beautiful vineyard right before us. We halted to taste the grapes, which were a heavenly relief to me, as I was almost exhausted. The grapes, though sour, revived our spirits amazingly. After eating a great many, we amply filled our pockets. In a short time I found my knee become more easy, and the gloom that had so very much depressed me was rapidly disappearing, until I at length proceeded in excellent spirits. Indeed, I never was more surprised than at the sudden change in my frame altogether, my knee improving every mile I walked.

At daylight, on the 3rd (of Sept.), we were much alarmed, not being able to make out a wood in any direction. At last, to our unspeakable delight, we perceived at a small distance a copse or kind of little forest, not more than three or four acres in circumference. We repaired to it without hesitation, and found it thick and well adapted for our concealment. Having pitched upon a convenient spot, we deposited our knapsacks, disburdened ourselves of our apples, etc., and, after being refreshed with a little biscuit and sausage, together with a dessert of fruit, which we could now afford, we betook ourselves to rest. I had not closed an eye since I had received the hurt; but at this moment I no sooner extended my weary limbs upon the ground than I was in a profound sleep; nor did I awake until roused by my comrades, who were alarmed by the voices of two men who came to work close to our hiding-place. We could hear them so very distinctly that we were of opinion they could not be

distant more than fifty paces. Their conversation was chiefly respecting the towns of Charleville and Mezières. They continued their work until sunset.

From hearing them mention those towns so repeatedly, in addition to other parts of the conversation, we were convinced of our being too far to the northward of our proper course. Travelling by nights, frequently extremely dark, though we had an excellent compass, it was impossible to avoid sometimes erring a little, more especially whenever a river turned us out of our proper direction. Those labourers being gone, which we did not regret, as the reader may suppose, we commenced our preparations, as we were accustomed, and, at the usual time of the evening, proceeded on our march towards the coast. My knee, when we started, was painful and stiff, but it gradually grew better by exercise.

At midnight we came suddenly upon a small town situated in a valley; nor did we perceive our error until it was too late to retrace our steps to avoid it. However, as it was an open town, we trusted that at so late an hour of the night we might escape through it without danger. We accordingly advanced as quickly as possible; nor did we meet a single soul until we got into the opposite fauxbourg, when we had to encounter a peasant on horseback. Mr. Ashworth asked him the name of the town we had just passed, and he informed us it was Neuville. We thanked him, continued our route, and that night travelled a considerable distance. In our journey we had often experienced a dreadful scarcity or total absence of water; and this night our thirst was very great, but we were able to allay it by the fruit we gathered in the orchards.

At about three o'clock on the morning of the 4th of September we entered a very convenient wood; and here we resolved to lie concealed for that day. We refreshed ourselves with a very small quantity of our biscuit and sausages, and had occasion to remark that our stock was getting very low, notwithstanding we had been so abstinent that strength for our journey could scarcely be supported. The dew was extremely heavy, and the ground very wet; so, making our beds of heath, leafy branches, and grass, we sank quietly to sleep. I found myself happy beyond expression, in consequence of my knee daily getting better.

The next evening, at the usual hour, we quitted our covert, but under distressing circumstances, for our fruit was exhausted, we had not a drop of water, and our thirst was excessive. We moved forward, almost perishing for want of moisture for our parched mouths and throats, and gasping lungs; and in vain we endeavoured to console ourselves by the hope of finding some brook or rivulet to relieve our anguish.

We travelled nearly seven hours in this horrible condition, without being able to discover a drop of water, except at one place, where there was a large ditch in which flax was steeped or deposited. I flew to it for relief, and, though its stench was abominable, I might have drunk copiously, had not my companions assured me that the consequence would be an immediate death. So raging was my thirst that I had still great difficulty in restraining myself; but at last I proceeded without tasting it.

I have been in all climates, almost in all parts of the universe; have endured excessive thirst at different periods of my life; have drunk vinegar, salt water, and even sucked the tarred sails on board a ship to endeavour to

assuage that agony; but I solemnly declare that I never felt anything equal to what I suffered from thirst during this night.

Finding no chance of obtaining water, at least in our direct course, we unanimously agreed to approach the first village we should discover, for the purpose of procuring a supply from some of the inhabitants' wells. An opportunity soon occurred, and we directed our steps with the greatest eagerness to this much-desired spot; but previously to our arrival at the village we descried a small orchard. My friend Tuthill, always on the alert, and naturally, as I before observed, active and expert, scaled the orchard wall in a very short time, notwithstanding the constant barking of a dog on the premises, and he returned with a supply of apples. They were very small, and of the wilding kind; but they answered our purpose, and alleviated our distressed state. We passed through one extremity of the village, got a supply of what we stood so much in need of, and proceeded; keeping more to the westward than we had lately done, in consequence of our discovery concerning Charleville. Having plenty of water, we now got on apace, with lighter hearts and brighter spirits.

CHAPTER V

The journey pursued—A bivouac in a wood—Dangers of being shot—Making free with an orchard—Crossing the Oise—A mode of obtaining provisions—A cabaret and a village *fête*—Kindness of the peasantry—Petit Essigny—Wringing drenched garments, and drying them over fading embers—A miserable landlord—A change of quarters—Luxuries of a hay-loft—A Samaritan of a hostess—Wretched sufferings of Mr. Essel—Resort to another village—A kind landlord—Sympathies for deserters—"A fellow-feeling makes men wondrous kind"—The luxuries of a clean bed—Resort to another village—A motherly hostess—A lucky road-acquaintance—Virtue and happiness in humble life—The charitable baker—Dangers from sportsmen to gentlemen hiding in woods—Mr. Essel's illness disappearing—Increased speed not always safe to fugitives—Coldness of the weather—An hospitable farmer—A French harvest-home—Hesdin—Nieuville—Étaples—Turned out of a straw-bed—A new inn, with a *gendarme* in disguise in the kitchen—Bribing a landlord—No boat to be had—An old shepherd too cunning for a young lieutenant and midshipmen—Extreme difficulties—High hopes—Despondency and resources.

During the next day, the 5th of September, nothing particular occurred. At dawn, having found a convenient wood, we concealed ourselves, as usual, during the day. At night we resumed our journey, and at about eleven we came to an immensely broad road.

About midnight we found ourselves all of a sudden at the beginning of a street, the buildings of which were large, and the town surrounding it appeared considerable.

This discovery astonished us the more, as the place had neither rampart nor fortification of any description, and hitherto we had been of opinion that there was not in France a town of this magnitude that was not well fortified. However, we had no time for debate or consideration, for we perceived lights in many of the windows; dogs were barking; we heard human voices in different directions; and our danger was extreme. Luckily at this moment we happened to perceive an opening, towards which we instantly made, and found it a by-lane which conducted us clear out of the town; but we still remained entirely ignorant as to what place this was, which made us determine to inquire at the first house we should approach, and in a few minutes an opportunity offered.

We perceived several huts on the roadside. Mr. Ashworth and myself advanced, leaving our companions concealed; and, knocking at the door of one of the huts, a man (as we supposed, in bed) asked what we wanted. We answered we were poor, distressed travellers, quite hungry and faint, and should be glad to know what distance we were from the next town. He told us, not above a mile from Montcornet.[1] We then proceeded, anxiously wishing for daylight, that we might ascertain on the map whereabouts Montcornet was situated.

A little before daylight, on Sunday the 6th, having crossed an inconsiderable river called the Serre, we halted in a wood not more than three leagues from this town. It was very thin, which made us shift and change our position many times before we could find any part cal-

[1] This town is seated on the banks of the river Serre, in Picardy. We learned since that it is famous for serge manufactories.

culated to conceal us. At last we selected a spot, which we made tolerably comfortable by breaking branches and placing them all round us.

At about two in the afternoon we were alarmed by a fowler and his pointer. The dog approached us very near, and as soon as he perceived us began to bark and yell. The master came also close to us, and kept whistling and calling to his dog, which at this time was a great distance from him, having retired precipitately on discovering us. The man kept on in a direct line in pursuit of the pointer: we perceived his legs and feet distinctly as he passed; but, from our position, were certain he did not see us. Our trepidation may easily be imagined, as well as our extreme joy at our hair-breadth escape.

At the usual hour we quitted our lair, and had the happiness to find that some apple-trees just outside the wood were covered with very excellent fruit; with which, I need scarcely observe, we all filled our pockets and knapsacks. What little biscuit we had now remaining was literally crumbled to dust, which made this supply of a juicy fruit almost a luxury. The night was excessively dark, and we had a number of awkward and severe falls.

Lieutenant Essel was now getting very much exhausted. His fatigue was extreme, and he became unable to keep up with us. From the great alteration which we had observed in his appearance during the last two or three days, we began to apprehend that he would not much longer be able to pursue the journey at any pace, and would be obliged to stop on the way. We resolved, however, at all events, to keep with him as long as possible. The alternative would be very painful.

On the next day, Monday the 7th, we surveyed our

stock of provisions, and found it miserably low. We were alarmed at the discovery that of biscuit, or rather biscuit-dust, we had not even a pound, and of our only remaining article of food, sausage, our store was about in proportion. What to do in this critical situation we were very much at a loss to know. One thing, at least, was certain, that to exist we must eat, and that to eat we must have food; and hence the conclusion was evident, that our plan, in which consisted our safety—the system of avoiding towns, keeping away from houses, and shunning the approach of anything connected with human nature—could not be adhered to much longer, whilst it was difficult to conceive what other scheme could be adopted.

After a very long and not a very pleasant discussion, we came to the conclusion that as Messrs. Tuthill and Ashworth were the most meagre in their appearance amongst us, and, consequently, the most like Frenchmen, they should endeavour to procure some bread at the first retired and lonely habitation we should see early in the night. Accordingly, at about nine o'clock, we perceived a house directly in our course, which appeared to answer the description required. The two Frenchified gentlemen advanced to try their address: Lieutenant Essel and myself remained seated close to a thick-set hedge. We continued in that position some time, waiting the result of our friends' embassy—my poor companion complaining grievously of the alteration in his health. Finding they did not return, we imagined that they had, perhaps, met with a good reception and were enjoying themselves; and we agreed, as the house was directly in our way, to pass by it carelessly, and, accordingly, we walked on. Just as we had passed the door, they made their appearance, with

a young man dressed like a peasant. They joined and informed us they could procure no relief at that house; but that there was a small village within a few hundred yards of us, and that this young man was going to show them a public-house in it, where they could get supplied with everything. I was decidedly of opinion that this was a great deal too kind on his part; and I advised them, therefore, to send this guide back, as we certainly could find the house without his assistance; but he insisted on conducting us—inquired if we were also of the party; and presently the village was in view, and was very small, at which I rejoiced greatly. Many people were moving about, and our guide informed us it was a *fête* day.

The public-house was now before us, and the young man pointed to it, saying, "You may enter without fear," and quitted us. I did not like this last observation. However, we were by this time on the threshold—a number of people were in the doorway; there was no alternative, and in we went. The house was crowded with both sexes, dancing and amusing themselves. The dancing ceased immediately after we entered; every eye was fixed upon us. We called for a place where we could sit and refresh ourselves, and were shown into a room. We asked for some bread, cheese, and wine; got them and ate heartily, although we could not boast of much comfort or of being much at our ease. Several of the peasants and their wives came and seated themselves close to our table, pressing us to take some of their *gâteaux*. From our general appearance, and particularly from our caps and knapsacks, they evidently mistook us for conscripts going to the army. We told them we were going to Guise, and were obliged to travel day and night

by forced marches, in consequence of our regiment being ordered away, and of our having remained at home too long. Fortunately for us they were not an inquisitive people, and did not question us about the number or the officers of the regiment, nor about any of our circumstances. We called for our bill, and desired our host to bring us a large loaf of bread and a bottle of brandy, as we might want them before our joining our regiment at Guise. This being done, they all wished us success, and we parted from them, most glad to get rid of their company.

At daylight we stopped at a wood joining a farmhouse, on the banks of the Oise. About seven in the evening of Tuesday the 8th we recommenced our march, after having been greatly alarmed by a genteelly dressed lady and two children that had passed us, with a servant, who went before her shaking the brambles and knocking the wet off the trees. They came so close to us as to touch the very bush that covered us. About half-past eight we crossed the Oise in two places, and once more were obliged to pass through a village to get to the bridge that led over that river.

At daybreak of the 9th, after a tedious and difficult march, having traversed a number of deep-ploughed fields and stubble fields, over hills and across valleys, we found ourselves again in the open plains, with poor Essel scarcely able to move. This was by far the worst situation in which we had been placed since we began our journey. On surveying, with the utmost anxiety and attention, all around us, we thought we could descry trees; but they were at a considerable distance, and out of our course. We nevertheless approached them. It commenced raining very fast; and when we had reached the much-desired

spot, it proved to be only a thin orchard, with a few scattered apple-trees. We still kept walking on, being well assured there was no shelter for us in our rear—at least none that was not at a great distance. We soon discovered a little village in the very direction we were going, and near it appeared a small wood. We advanced tolerably fast. Poor Essel was obliged to lag a great way behind. Meeting an old peasant, we inquired the name of the village, and found it to be Petit Essigny. He told us there was a pathway on the right of it, if we wished to avoid passing through. We were, he said, five leagues from St. Quentin. This old man's remarks appeared to us very singular: he took his leave, and we walked on. It rained, and the morning was advancing, it being now nearly eight o'clock. What we imagined to be a wood, adjacent to the village, proved, upon approaching it, to be only a few shrubs; on arriving at which we found they were pretty thick, and the grass very high, the enclosure being surrounded by a quickset hedge. We instantly got through this hedge, and lay close down. Our situation was very unpleasant. The grass, which was excessively wet, added to our misery, having been nearly soaked to the skin before we entered it. The rain off the bushes came literally upon our poor bodies in sluices; but this was considerable preferable to the risk of going into the village, where we suspected that *gendarmes* might be lurking, the place being so near a large town. We continued in this wretched plight until about four o'clock, when Mr. Essel became quite weak and exhausted, and the rest of our little party were not much better. This induced us to quit this inhospitable place and endeavour to get shelter in a house, let the consequence be what it might.

Accordingly we approached a single hut at a short distance from the village; entered it, and found in it a poor old peasant and two lads, who proved to be his sons: they were shivering over a few cinders, and appeared to be very poor and miserable. We requested that they would make a good fire and allow us to dry our soaked clothes and to warm ourselves; and this they did, but not until we had promised a liberal payment. They seemed to be astonished at our appearance, and greatly at a loss to know who and what we could be. The fire being at last made, we gladly proceeded to wring the water out of our clothes and endeavour to get them dry. We made the old peasant bring us some bread: he also gave us a little butter, which by chance he had in the house; the old dame, his wife, having taken all the rest that morning to St. Quentin market.

We imagined that we should do extremely well if the old man would allow us to remain all night, even by his fireside, as it rained so excessively hard that it was absolutely impossible to attempt to travel. This was intimated to our venerable host, accompanied by an assurance that he should have his reward; but, without hesitation, he declared to us in the most positive manner that this was impossible. What were we to do, for it seemed that sort of night which made the gentle Cordelia declare that she could not turn out her enemy's dog; and yet we, Christians, and gentlemen, and officers to boot, seemed to be in danger of becoming the wretches whose "houseless heads and unfed sides" were so pitied by the mad King Lear. Our reflections were not of a very consolatory character.

At length the old curmudgeon of a host told us that

there was a public-house in the village, where we could get supplied with everything; and he added, that, as it was so very near, there could be no great difficulty in our getting to it. At this moment two peasants were passing his door, and, determined at any rate to turn us out, he called these two fellows to guide us to the place. The men appeared very civil, but, had it been the reverse, there was no alternative; so we paid the old Cerberus for his scanty fire, his mouldy brown bread and sour butter, and left his house with the disposition to shake the very dust, or rather, in this case, the very mud, off our shoes on his threshold. The figure of this flinty host of ours is still before me. He was a tall, thin, misshapen fellow; and the effects of his cadaverous and hideous countenance were not improved by a most sinister squint, and a malign, ill-natured sneer, that might well warn the unfortunate that they had little of humanity to expect at his hands.

Under our civil guides we soon arrived at the village, and, to our inexpressible joy, found it to be a small and miserable place. Our guides showed us the public-house and took their leave. We entered this poverty-stricken hovel, and found that the good landlady had nothing to give us but bread and eggs; and further, that there was not a bed in the house, her guests being accustomed to sleep in a loft where there was plenty of clean hay. This, however, was luxurious to poor wanderers, who had fed and slept in the manner in which we had ever since we had escaped from prison. But we had to study appearances, and, as there was no other inn (as they termed the wretched hovel) in the village, we seemed to hesitate whether we should remain here, or proceed to the next considerable town or to St. Quentin, and we accordingly

inquired how far it was off. Our hostess replied that it was not above three or four miles to a tolerably large village, but that St. Quentin was two leagues distant. We pretended to be much chagrined at this information, and told her that it rained too hard for us to go that distance, and, inconvenient as it was, we would remain with her and sleep in the hay-loft that night, in preference to being exposed any longer to the inclemency of the weather. We had a good fire made, completed the drying of our clothes, got some supper, and retired to the hay-loft. The kind woman gave us two blankets to cover us. We found this accommodation sufficiently good, and we very soon fell fast asleep.

The next day, fortunately for us (as it kept us under cover), was very bad, raining without intermission. We continued in our loft, except one of us, who went to procure breakfast, and to inform the landlady (who we found was a widow) that we would stay until evening, in hopes that the rain might cease. We sent her our tattered garments, stockings, etc., to mend. We could move about without much fear in this place, as we found they were utter strangers to the sight of a *gendarme*. The good lady took us for conscripts, and commiserated our situation. She had a brother in the army, then in Prussia; and she brought us a letter to read that she had lately received from him. I said that I had served in the same regiment, with which she was very much pleased.

At about seven we paid this worthy old hostess, and took our leave. It was a clear, starlight night, and the weather promised favourably; but the ground was so excessively slippery and muddy that we could scarcely prevent ourselves from falling every step we took. At

about ten, Mr. Essel was seized with a violent bleeding at the nose and mouth. We feared that he had burst a blood-vessel. This, together with a dysentery which he had been troubled with for some time, rendered him so excessively weak that he could not move a step. We were greatly affected at this misfortune, and agreed to convey him to the next house we should find. Fortunately, the village alluded to by our landlady, when we first arrived at her house, was in sight, and the view of it gave our sick friend fresh courage; but we were apprehensive it was too large for our security; however, we were resolved at all events to procure him a lodging there, and to be vigilant, and if we perceived any danger, to be off instantly. About half-past eleven we arrived at this village, and, to our joy, it proved to be by far inferior to what we had expected. Mr. Ashworth went into a public-house to reconnoitre, and to inquire if food and shelter could be supplied to our suffering friend. He returned shortly with the glad tidings that he had succeeded, and he assured us that, from all he could observe, he was convinced that we should incur no danger by remaining at the inn for the whole night, and even for the next day. The joy this intelligence spread amongst us is hardly conceivable. We all accordingly agreed most cordially to remain with our unfortunate friend, sincerely hoping that he might by the next night get rid of his malady and recover some portion of his strength. The bleeding had ceased, a symptom which we construed to be much in his favour, and at last we all entered the public-house, the sick gentleman and myself bringing up the rear.

We were very civilly received by the landlord, a decent young man, who showed us into a nice, clean, and comfort-

able back-room, in which there was a separate bed for each of us. It was rather startling, however, to hear him assure us that "we were perfectly safe with him"; for this guarantee of safety, even if sincere, at least implied that we were objects of suspicion. Our doubts, however, were soon dispelled, for he added, to our great relief, "I have been situated in a similar manner once myself, and shall ever have a fellow-feeling for others under such unhappy circumstances. When I quitted the army as a conscript, I travelled several hundred miles by night, and concealed myself in woods in the daytime." This was consolatory, and we gave him *nods* of assent and approbation; for it was dangerous to speak, as a word or two would have led to a conversation, in which it might not have been convenient to answer questions with truth, and not easy to evade them by ingenuity, or even to defeat them by falsehood.

We took our refreshment with the keenness which showed that we had not lately been accustomed to good cheer, and we found, or flattered ourselves that we found, that our sick friend was already getting better. Each retired to his bed, as happy as any creature in the universe. Heavens! What a paradise! It is not in my power to express or to give any idea of the delight and happiness I felt at being once more in a comfortable bed, with everything neat and clean about me. We had been thirteen days and nights without once taking off our clothes, except the preceding night in the hay-loft, when we had our garments repaired, and those days and nights had been passed, the former in sleeping, as chance might be, in mud, bog, or quagmire, or on dry or wet green leaves, whilst the latter had been spent in toiling, upon empty

stomachs and with parched throats, over all the bad grounds and awkward impediments which must be encountered by travellers who have private reasons for avoiding highways or beaten tracks. Such sufferings are wonderfully conducive to make men feel and be thankful for the comforts of a good bed; and I need not observe that we all remained in bed, not only throughout the night, but throughout the greater part of the next day [Friday, 11th].

As soon as it became dusk we paid our bill, which was moderate, with gratitude; and, taking a most friendly leave of our simple-minded and kind-hearted host, we again buckled on our knapsacks and resumed our habit of travelling at night-time. Essel was greatly refreshed; we found ourselves comparatively quite strong and well, from the last night's repose.

At daylight on the 12th it began to rain incessantly and in torrents; we were then very near a small village. Our late success made us more bold than we had been at our first setting out, and having no wood to shelter us, we resolved to go into the village. We found it very well calculated for our purpose, and got admitted into a public-house; where, after procuring something to eat, we requested permission to lie down to rest a little in any place, expecting to be shown into a hay-loft,—but we were agreeably surprised; for our good old landlady put sheets on the only two beds she had, and told us we might rest ourselves on them until night. We perceived that she also supposed we were conscripts. She got Mr. Essel something warm, and appeared very attentive. At dusk we paid the good dame, and, as usual, began our march. Poor Essel complained a great deal, and my feet began to swell; although

they were not painful, I feared some bad consequence from their swelling. About ten, our friend declared he could not advance a step farther; consequently, we sat down to allow him time to rest. We agreed to wait with him a day or two, to see if he should improve, but were greatly at a loss where to take him for this night. Thus meditating, we were joined by a man going our road. He saluted us very kindly, and expressed his sorrow at seeing our comrade so ill. The worthy fellow was in a cheerful mood, and evidently of a communicative nature, and seemed disposed to let us know all about himself and his affairs, which was by far more convenient to us than had he expected equal frankness on our part. He informed us that he was a baker, and was returning from the place where he had been at work the whole week, to his little family, in a village about two miles off. The honest fellow appeared to derive a sort of melancholy satisfaction in dwelling upon the memory of his wife, who, he added mournfully, had recently died, leaving him three young orphans. The good-hearted man concluded his unsophisticated, open garrulity, by informing us that he had two good beds, to which he assured us that we were welcome, and he gave us this welcome with such a frankness and warmth that no cynic could suspect guile in such a character, or could be unwarmed by gratitude at his benevolent nature. The honest baker added to his other assurances that he would procure for us everything we could want or might desire. It was evident that we were always to be mistaken for conscripts *on a retreat*, for this our jolly companion assured us with a knowing look, adding, "that his village was small, and that there was no danger with him." Our hearts

felt the truth of this, and withal its inestimable value.

We soon arrived at this poor man's dwelling, and he seemed as glad to receive us as if he had by good fortune unexpectedly found some friends or kindred that had been long absent and dear to his heart. He made a blazing fire, and bade the children get up and prepare the beds for our reception. This they cheerfully did, and then retired to their loft. We felt that we were particularly safe with this poor hospitable stranger, and the whole domestic scene was at least calculated to impress upon us the truth that contentment, happiness, generosity, and the best feelings of our nature are not the exclusive heritage of the rich. We warmed ourselves over his glowing hearth, wished him good-night, and gladly sank into our comfortable beds.

The next day our hospitable friend procured us all the things we wanted. In every respect nothing could have been more kind and liberal than the conduct of this unpretending, humble, and good man; and the reader, in the sequel, will have further proofs of my just estimate of his character.

As we had promised our friend Essel, we waited until dusk on Sunday the 13th, and then paid our host liberally for all we had received. He escorted us a mile or two on the road and took his leave, as if sorry to part, but full of satisfaction that he had had an opportunity of so well performing a duty to those who were in the extremities of need.

At a little before daylight on the 14th (September), we entered a wood, and found a very convenient place for our concealment. We conjectured that we were about five

leagues from Arras. At about eleven we were alarmed by the noise and whistling of a fowler with a dog, and in a few minutes we heard the report of his gun; the shot rattled through the bushes in which we lay, and a partridge perched close to us. This circumstance alarmed us prodigiously, as we could hear the man and dog advancing towards the very spot. To move would have been imprudent, since he was so very close that it was impossible to avoid being discovered. We waited the event, without the smallest hope of escaping from being seen—the dog advanced—flushed the partridge nearly at our feet—the fowler close to us. Fortunately the bird took an opposite direction to the spot where we remained concealed, and the master and dog followed, and in a few minutes relieved us from the consternation they had thrown us into.

At the usual hour, on the night of the 14th of September, we left our leafy concealment to commence our nocturnal progress; and we were put into good spirits by finding our friend's health greatly improved. We walked a great distance this night, in order to make up for our recent delays and stoppages; but we had nearly been victims to the old proverb, "The more haste the worse speed"; and we found that it was less essential to our safety to travel fast, than to contrive to stop, at or before daybreak, within the reach of some wood sufficiently large and thick to hide us. At dawn, however, on Tuesday the 15th, to our great dismay, we found ourselves on an open plain, and we anxiously stretched our eyes in every direction, but could not discern the least appearance of a wood, although, to our alarm, we beheld several villages. As our comrade was much better, we determined to proceed, avoiding human habitations as much as possible. After

we had passed by the first village, we discovered a copse or shrubbery near the second; so we quickened our pace, and, advancing rapidly, we entered it at its part the most remote from the village. It proved to be merely a nursery, and but thinly stocked with small trees, or even shrubs; but we selected the spot most favourable to our object, and happily we contrived to conceal ourselves in it until darkness afforded us the usual motive to our sortie. At eleven, as we were passing a small village, being excessively thirsty, and not able to discover any watering place, we agreed *to border close*, in the hope of being able to procure some water at one of the wells with which these villages abound. Mr. Ashworth and our sick comrade were employed in getting some, while Mr. Tuthill and myself retired to a small distance, under cover of a quickset hedge. Two women and a man passed close by us. The women continued to walk on, but the latter halted and turned on his heel. I was next to him. He eyed me closely, and exclaimed, "*Vous-êtes Anglois?*" To which I replied, "*Je suis aussi bon François que vous, je l'espère.*" This was the only time in the whole course of my life that I had felt afraid to acknowledge my country. The women, hearing the conversation, called to the fellow "to come along and mind his own business." He appeared to wish to remain; but, on their repeatedly calling him, he left us. Having been joined by our companions, we proceeded.

At break of day on Wednesday the 16th, we got into an excellent thick wood, and found a material change in the weather as we advanced to the northward; sometimes there was a sort of grey frost, which made us extremely cold before the rising of the sun; nor could we at all times receive the benefit of that heavenly body until noon, owing

to the thickness of the part of the wood that we were (when practicable) obliged to occupy. We found an abundance of filberts, filled our pockets with them, and felt particularly happy at succeeding thus far. This was the last wood we expected to inhabit prior to our seeing the sea-coast; and we were, at times, replete with the idea of its being the last night we should remain in the land of usurpation and tyranny. At the usual time we commenced our route, and left the town of St. Pol about two miles on our left-hand side.

At about ten our progress was impeded by the river Canche. After examining it in several directions without success, we agreed to send Mr. Ashworth to a farmhouse hard by, to inquire the nearest place that we could cross; from whence he returned in a few minutes with one of the farmer's men, who had been desired to direct him, and assured us the people were extremely civil. It appeared to him to be a good place to get a supply of provisions—we were excessively hungry,—and, as the passage across the river was immediately at the end of the farmhouse, and as they had already discovered our number, we mutually consented to put the farmer's hospitality to the test, and, if possible, to procure what we wanted. We advanced with the man, who showed us in; and we were very kindly received by the master of the house, who conducted us into a decent back-room. The kitchen, when we first entered, was full of peasantry at supper.

The farmer's harvest had been that day finished, or gathered in, and he was giving his labourers a feast on the occasion, which, we were told, was an immemorial custom in that part of the country, throughout which many things reminded us of our own. In fact, we were now in the

midst of a French harvest-home; and, though the scene was gratifying, yet in our peculiar situation we should have been by far better pleased had we been alone. All was joy and happiness under this rustic and hospitable roof, if I except the twinges of apprehension that now and then would disturb me and my friends. Nothing, however, could surpass the attention and kindness of this good farmer. He supplied us spontaneously with everything that his house could afford. Certain it is that he took us for Frenchmen and conscripts, and thought, perhaps, that we were going to fight for the glory of France, under the eagles of the new emperor. Little did he suspect that we were English naval officers, encountering all dangers and enduring all hardships, for the sake of once more fighting under

> The flag that braved a thousand years
> The battle and the breeze.

As our host would not accept of any payment for what we had received, we made a present to the servant who was to guide us, and we took our leave of this good man full of gratitude for his kindness.

We conjectured that we were not more than seven leagues from Étaples, a town on the mouth of the river Canche, with a tolerably good harbour for small vessels. This put us in such good spirits that even Mr. Essel, in spite of his weakness, was determined to go that distance before daylight. We quickened our pace, and proceeded, with light hearts and full of hope.

We passed the strong town of Hesdin at midnight, and as might be supposed, we took care to keep a very respectful distance from it. At daylight on Thursday the

17th, to our great mortification, we found that we were at least three leagues from Étaples. We had exerted ourselves right manfully, and had performed our allotted task; but the journey was much longer than we had supposed when we quitted the farmhouse. A bourg, or municipal town, called Nieuville, lay now immediately in our route, without our having any means of avoiding it, on account of the serpentine course of the river. Neither wood nor anything else to shelter us was in view. Our situation was most critical, and we unwillingly came to the conclusion that was obvious—pass through the town we must. Our object was to get through it before any, or at least many, of the inhabitants could be up, and by dint of a quick pace. This we happily accomplished. As soon as possible we struck across the fields; but, to our dismay, no appearance of a wood could be discovered. Even in the fields people were moving in different directions, and it was not much to our comfort that we observed many of them to be military. Surrounded by such numerous difficulties, we resolved to go into a small contiguous village, imagining that even this would be less dangerous than to remain straying and wandering in the open fields. We arrived about eight o'clock at a hut in the village; avoiding the public-house, as there are, in general, police officers, or *gendarmes*, lurking around such places when in the vicinity of large towns. We asked the inhabitants if they could provide us breakfast. They replied, "Yes, we can give you some milk-soup and bread." We approved of this repast very much; and, after paying them, we requested they would have the goodness to allow us to repose ourselves for a few hours in some convenient place; but this they refused, hinting that they

suspected that we were deserters from the camp at Boulogne. We assured them, upon our words of honour, they were very much mistaken; that, on the contrary, we were going that way, but were so very much fatigued, and having a sick comrade, we wanted a little rest. After importuning them a long time, and promising a good reward, they allowed us to go into a barn-loft full of straw. We were particularly obliged to them, and perfectly contented with this apartment; but, when nearly settled, and each had got covered over with straw, to our great mortification and annoyance, the owner came, having repented of his granting permission to enter it, and insisted upon our instantly quitting his premises. All our rhetoric with this fellow was in vain. So we were compelled to quit our habitation about eleven o'clock, and walk towards another more respectable village. We inquired of a shepherd, on entering this place, if he could direct us to a public-house; and he pointed out one to us. We proceeded, but with little hopes of escaping from being discovered or arrested. However, we determined to call for a private room the moment we arrived at the cabaret, being in hopes (if we could avoid police officers in passing to a private apartment) we might stand a chance of remaining unnoticed until night. In this we succeeded; and, being supplied with refreshments, we were provided with a suitable apartment immediately. The only person in the house was a girl of about eighteen years of age, who made us a comfortable fire, and shook up two beds, that we might rest a little if we pleased. Seeing that there was no danger, we pretended to be quite at our ease, and coolly asked her where her father and mother were. She replied, "That the former was watching the sheep outside

of the village, and that the latter was gone to Étaples." We found by her description of her father that he was the very man who had directed us to her. She asked us, "If we were not conscripts going to the camp of Boulogne?" We answered in the affirmative; and begged her not to let anybody enter our room, as we had several things to settle amongst ourselves and wished to be in private. She promised to obey us; but little did her acquiescence bring confidence or comfort, when she added that there was at that moment a *gendarme* in the kitchen in the disguise of a peasant. This was enough to render us tremulous. But even this was not all; for she informed us that this *gendarme* had just come from Boulogne with a party, in order to procure forage for the *gendarmes'* horses there. We had evidently got into a hornet's nest, or almost within the jaws of the lion; but, preserving as much the appearance of tranquillity as possible, we informed her that we had not the least desire to see anybody but her father, with whom we wished to have some conversation. She promised to send for him as soon as her guest in the kitchen had quitted the house. The "soon" was devoutly to be wished; and glad were we when, in a short time, we were told that he had taken his departure. The girl now sent for her father; and her mother also returned. We were in great hopes that, as these people were very poor, we might be able to induce them to procure us a boat, through the medium of some of their friends, the fishermen on the coast, who might not be temptation-proof, or impervious to the influence of a few *louis d'or*. Convinced that nothing much could be accomplished without this all-powerful metal, each of us began to search in the different parts of his garments for his due

proportion. We had been obliged to take the precaution of stitching what gold coin we had in the seams of our clothes, that we might not lose it in the event of our being arrested. To our great sorrow—and, I may add, astonishment—Mr. Essel discovered that his gold coin, to the amount of £45 sterling, had slipped out of a pad which he had contrived for the purpose of concealing it, and which he had always worn round his neck in his neck-handkerchief; nor could he recollect having untied it but once since we set out, and that was at the worthy baker's cottage, where he suspected he had left it. This baker had appeared to be an honest man, and, as I have already observed, had behaved excessively kindly to us. It was possible that the money might have been left there without our host having seen it until after our departure; but the poor fellow could have no opportunity of restoring the treasure to its right and now embarrassed owner. The loss was to us, at that moment, very distressing, but not irreparable, as we still had a tolerably good sum, and Lieutenant Essel and myself had two gold watches, sufficient, as we trusted, to inspirit the shepherd and induce him to assist us. He at length arrived; when, after taking every feasible means of enjoining secrecy, we disclosed our situation, object, and what we were, and promised to reward him very liberally, provided he could procure us a conveyance across the Channel. We were certain, we observed, that he must have a number of seafaring acquaintances on the coast, and we would make it well worth their trouble to assist us. He hesitated very much at first; but, having shown him a purse, and repeating our promises of reward, he assured us he would try every possible means, and he declared that, at all events, we were

perfectly safe under his roof, and that he would proceed to see what he could accomplish. We were greatly elated, and were almost certain of succeeding, from his not raising any obstacles. Our anxiety for this fellow's return is not to be described: every individual that passed appeared to be somebody he had sent, or was about to bring, to agree with us for our passage. The much-wished-for moment, as we thought, at length arrived, when the old shepherd, with a demure countenance, opened our door, and, having closed it again with the utmost caution, began to inform us, "That all his search to procure a boat had been ineffectual; that the fishermen along the coast were constrained to bring their boats to Étaples and lay them up there, whence they dared not move without a passport from the commandant of the town, as well as a soldier as a guard in each boat, to prevent their having communication with the English cruisers or going without the limits. They were also under the necessity of going out and returning only in the daytime." To our vexation and grief, the fellow added, "that we could not remain in his house any longer than the dusk of the evening, as he was obliged to return an account to the mayor of the village of every stranger that might be with him after dark, taking his passport at the same time for the mayor's inspection;" and the fellow concluded all this anything but comfortable information and kindness by lifting up his hat, scratching his head, and saying, "I hope, gentlemen, you will reward me for my pains and for keeping counsel." We were absolutely confounded. We stood amazed—staring at each other; and for some time were unable to utter a word. At length I broke silence, and observed, "That it was the fault of his *better half*, who

appeared to us, from the instant we had seen her, to be a bitter, malignant creature. She, no doubt, had been consulted;" and her sour looks and conduct upon every occasion convinced us all that this opinion was well founded.

Having nothing to expect from this unfeeling and unprincipled couple, we paid them liberally for all we had had, and for all they had done, or pretended to have done; and as soon as it was dark we left their, to us, not agreeable abode. The point of departure had been a subject of altercation; for, as soon as they had received our money, they insisted upon turning us out; whilst we, for our own purposes, as resolutely maintained our right to remain until it was dark. Both of the inhospitable pair had repeatedly threatened to call in the mayor, in order to arrest us, if we remained a moment longer; but this could scarcely have been worse than running the risk of being seen in the daytime. However, darkness at length shrouded the earth, and we left this unpropitious roof with no very merciful, or, we fear, Christian feelings, towards those that drove us out.

When in the open air, we were utterly perplexed as to how we should act and as to what course we should steer. We began to imagine that what we had been told respecting the boats might be partly true. Sometimes we supposed that it would be better to proceed towards Rotterdam; at others we thought of recrossing the Canche and directing our wearisome course towards St. Valery; at others we imagined it would be better to repair to any port where we might be likely to find an American or other neutral vessel, in which we might escape; but at last we agreed unanimously to cross the river, as at all

events the safest plan for that night, and afterwards to proceed to some villages that might be close down on the sea-coast. We were thus consulting, or had just come to this conclusion, when the shepherd's daughter made her appearance, and gently told us, "That her father had sent her to show us a house where we were sure of finding a person that would be of service to us, and who would put us across the river; which was," she added, "by far the safest side." We thanked the girl, who appeared the whole evening very much affected at the conduct of her parents; and she returned, begging us not to mention who had directed us—which, of course, we promised, and we kept our word. One of us was now deputed to reconnoitre. It was about ten o'clock; the house was on the side of the road, and a number of soldiers were passing on their route to the camp: this circumstance retarded our project, as we were obliged to keep within a hedge until the military had passed, and by this time it was full eleven o'clock. Then Mr. Tuthill (the deputed person) advanced; and soon returned and informed us that he had seen a man who had given him some hopes, and that he would rejoin us shortly. This was most welcome news. The person made his appearance, and told us he would direct us to a friend's house on the other side, who would, he believed, do what we wished. Heavens! what joyful intelligence! "His boat," he said, "would put us across as soon as she should be afloat; the tide of flood was then making, and he would return again to where we were in an hour, by which time he supposed the boat would be ready." This put us in the highest spirits. An hour ago we were in the depths of despair; our feelings of joy were now heightened by contrast. With the vividness of

lightning flashed across my mind all our past sufferings; and, from the number of dangers which we had almost miraculously escaped, it struck me that we were special favourites of Fortune, and that we were about to reap the glorious object of all our wishes. Habit, however, had taught us distrust and caution; and we shifted our situation, lest this stranger might turn out to be a false friend, or a scoundrel sent to deceive us, and we placed ourselves where we could easily discover whether he had any auxiliaries with him when he came back. At the appointed time he came to where he expected to find us, by himself, which convinced us that his intentions were more honest than we had supposed. In a few minutes we were carried to the opposite side, where he secured his boat, and guided us to the house above-mentioned, assuring us that they were people we could depend upon, and who had many friends, fishermen, on the water-side. He would not enter the cottage, or hut, but quitted us at the threshold, having received a sufficient recompense for the trouble we had given. We knocked repeatedly at the door. It began to rain very heavily; nor could we gain admittance until we had given many assurances that we were particular friends who only wished to be sheltered a few minutes from the inclemency of the night. These protestations at length gained us permission to enter.

CHAPTER VI

A false direction and an appalling repulse—A bribe refused—A deluge, and shelter in a barn—A fatal resolution—Dangers of fugitives journeying by daylight—A market-day at Étaples—Passing through crowds not very convenient for runaway prisoners of war—An attempt to reach the sand-hills on the coast—A bold progress through a despicable village—The last house—Parching thirst, and begging for a draught of water—An acquiescence, or reply, in the shape of two custom-house officers—Our capture—A clever fiction well devised, better sustained, and totally defeated—Getting rid of suspicious goods—An examination before the mayor—Americanism and the American gentleman—An awkward exposure—A *mittimus* to Boulogne gaol—An examination of our persons and clothes—Our fate sealed, and hope destroyed.

Both the man and woman of the house stared at us with great amazement; and, finding that we were utter strangers, they begged to know what we wanted, and why we had disturbed them so unseasonably. This reception was rather portentous and appalling; but humility becomes the unfortunate, and we humbly begged that they would make themselves quite easy, for we were absolutely come as friends in great distress, to solicit protection and assistance. This appeased them; and we proceeded to state that we were Frenchmen, who wished to be conveyed as quickly as possible into some part of Normandy or Brittany. We made them very liberal offers; but, to our dismay, they were thoroughly "temptation-proof." To

all our bribery their hearts and minds were as cold as asbestos. The woman at last observed, "that it was true that she had a brother who was a fisherman on the sea-coast," and our eyes glistened at what we thought was the beginning of good news; but then came the sad addenda, that his boat had been taken round to Étaples, and that when he wished to fish he was obliged to embark under the surveillance and regulations which had been described to us by the shepherd. Alas! alas! we began to fear that the shepherd was not the egregious liar we had taken him for. The woman's story was confirmed by the husband; and both assured us that, upon our knocking at their door, they had suspected us to be *gendarmes* in disguise. These fellows, it appeared, were frequently in the habit of practising such tricks upon their countrymen. The good old couple, however, soon insisted upon our quitting their house, and in a manner which proved that they were not accustomed to make use of much ceremony. In vain did we point out to them our miserable plight, and expatiate upon the extreme badness of the weather. We talked of the excessive darkness of the night, the torrents of rain that were pouring as if heaven and earth were coming in contact, and we entreated them to allow us to shelter ourselves in any barn, cow-house, or even pig-sty; but we might as well have appealed to an Egyptian mummy. In proportion as we were mendicant they became peremptory, and even fierce; and at last we were obliged to depart in what seemed little less than a deluge. As soon as they saw that they had got us over the threshold, some few and faint feelings of commiseration seemed to touch their obdurate breasts, and they had the charity to point out to us a direction which led to a barn, which

they assured us was full of hay, and seldom visited, so that we could very safely remain concealed in it until the following night. They further advised us to proceed either to Dieppe or St. Valery, as the two ports at which it was most probable that we should succeed in procuring a boat.

We shortly discovered the barn, and had the good fortune to arrive at it a little before daylight. We found it full of hay, as they had stated; a most timely relief for us, being quite drenched with the incessant rain, and all over mud and dirt. Each soon found, or made, a convenient hole for himself through the hay, taking the precaution to work a good way down and to cover himself well over, lest our steps into this place should lead to a suspicion and we might be found out. We fell into a most profound sleep; nor did I awake until nine o'clock in the morning (Friday, 18th Sept.), when I heard my name called repeatedly by Mr. Tuthill. He proposed that we should quit that place immediately, and get down to the sea-side, as the day was the only time to succeed in procuring a boat, from the method they had taken of securing all vessels at night. I used the most forcible arguments I was master of to dissuade them from so rash a proceeding; and pointed out the caution we had observed in the inland parts of the country as the only thing that had ensured our success in arriving where we then were; although there had been much less danger in the interior than on the sea-coast, where there would be, of course, a strict look-out kept by custom-house officers, *gardes de côte*, etc. I suggested, as the better plan, to wait until night: we could, in the event of not succeeding, always make this our rendezvous, and could return to it before daylight,

procuring subsistence at some lonely cottage during the night. All my rhetoric was in vain: they appeared determined to try their fortune by daylight. I then requested, at any rate, that they would wait until noon,—the usual time for the country people to dine,—as we might with the more ease get away unnoticed. This was at last agreed to; so we remained buried in the hay until the hour of noon, when, unperceived by anybody, we crept out, and, getting upon the highway, proceeded in the direction we had intended to take. We put a bold front upon disastrous affairs, and, with apparent intrepidity, we marched on. Unluckily, it was market-day at Étaples, and the road was crowded with people going to and returning from the ferry-boat. Our only plan was to walk directly through them, on the principle that no man whose object was flight and escape would walk amid crowds of enemies in open day. This was the only course that we could adopt; and, though all our calculations proved to be miserably erroneous, and our hopes fallacious, still I had nothing with which I had to reproach myself.

We kept advancing towards the sand-hills with all the appearance of carelessness and confidence, but with a quick, and, as far as we could assume appearances, a bold and firm step; and we arrived at last at a poor, sorry village, through which we had to pass. We had actually got to the very last house, when our poor friend Ashworth felt extremely exhausted, and expressed that his parching thirst obliged him to ask for a draught of water. On all such occasions every one of the party was consulted, and the majority of votes constituted the ultimatum, or decision; and whether a long train of success, or a long succession of narrow escapes, had made us vainly confident,

I cannot say, but not one of us saw the slightest danger in Ashworth's entering this house. It was impossible to suppose that so wretched a village could contain either troops or *gendarmes;* and as we had passed through the place without attracting any notice whatever, we did not imagine that there could be any danger in entering the last house at its extremity. The glorious sea, with all its inspirations, was before us, and we laughed at what we had undergone, for our hearts were light, and our minds were full of the glad prospects of our attaining to all our wishes.

Ashworth entered the house, and we advanced slowly, lagging and loitering for him to rejoin us. His absence appeared very long—unnecessarily so. Suspense and impatience gave way to suspicion, and suspicion was succeeded by alarm. I shall never forget my conflicting emotions —they grew stronger and stronger every moment. At length, Mr. Tuthill broke silence, and expressed a wish to go and ascertain what had detained our companion. Essel and myself remained on the side of the road, anxiously looking out. They very soon appeared; and, to our inexpressible grief and mortification, were conducted by two armed men in a uniform entirely foreign to us. These soon proved to be *douaniers*, or custom-house officers, with which, at that period, the coast of France abounded; but none of them had ever fallen under our observation or cognisance. I clearly perceived that these fellows had taken both our companions into custody, from the manner in which they approached. When they had joined us, Mr. Ashworth introduced me to them as Captain Cox, of the ship *Favourite*, of New York—the story fixed upon in case of being stopped. We had been cast away near

Marseilles, and all hands had perished, except Florence Heath (Mr. Ashworth), mate; William Dixon (Mr. Tuthill), supercargo; and Mr. Essel (whose new name I now forget), passenger. We were bound to Barcelona. Cargo—slaves and cotton. Only the supercargo and mate could speak French. They appeared to commiserate our situation, and had not the least doubt but that what we alleged was true. "But they must take us," they said, "to the mayor of the town, who would, no doubt, grant us passports to proceed to some seaport, whence we could take shipping for America, or any other place we pleased." We expressed our warmest thanks for this mark of their attention; but (if they pleased) we added, "That we did not wish to put them to the inconvenience of going out of their way on our account." They replied, "That it was entirely in their way; and it was impossible we could proceed along the coast without papers: they were only astonished how we had crossed the kingdom of France (or, more properly speaking, the empire) without being arrested. We had been much to blame in not having procured passports prior to our quitting Marseilles." We assured them we were ignorant of its being in the smallest degree necessary, that we were born in a country where nothing of the kind was required, and where it would be deemed a very great insult to ask any person where he came from or whither he was going. We, of course, alluded to public functionaries; for we well recollected the proverbial character of the Americans for inquisitiveness, and Dr. Franklin's story of his putting up a printed board over his apartment, whenever he arrived in an American town, so full of all particulars relating to himself as to render it impossible, as he thought, for even

American curiosity to intrude upon his privacy with a question.

We of course regretted that we had not been more enlightened upon the laws and customs of "*ce pays ci*," and at length we arrived at the ferry-boat, and in a few minutes found ourselves in the town of Étaples, under different circumstances and in a different company from what he had desired or expected. We still entertained hopes of escape; but, unfortunately, each of us had about his person many things most inconvenient to be inspected by French *douaniers*, and most unlikely to corroborate our fiction of our being shipwrecked Americans. My brains were set to work to "get to windward" of this quicksand, and I whispered to my "mate" to intimate to his unwelcome or awkward friends, that I was fatigued, and that I wished to take some little refreshment at any convenient inn before I had the honour of appearing before the mayor. Our civil conductors consented that the fatigued gentleman should take what refreshment he stood in need of, and of which, I need scarcely say, they intended to be participators. We arrived at a cabaret, were allowed to enter, were conducted into a good room, and, as if I were the most easy and indifferent gentleman that ever proceeded from America, I called authoritatively for a supply of bread and wine. During this repast we alternately had an excuse for retiring: I need not say that we took care to get rid of almost every article that might prove that our fiction had not the saving grace of probability.

We at last made the best of a very bad or unpromising case; and, putting on the appearance of unconcern and mirth, we followed our conductors. They told us that they

were under the necessity of waiting upon their captain previously to going before the mayor. He received me and my companions with politeness, and all things seemed to indicate that the interview might pass off without danger, until he politely told me that he must send for the mayor to be present at our examination. This changed the whole complexion of the case; and I am sure the effect must have been visible in most of our countenances. At length, "His Worship" arrived, not at all to our comfort; but what rendered his presence more annoying was his bringing with him "*an American gentleman.*" It is said that the society of a gentleman is always desirable; but the ghosts did not strike more terror into "the soul of Richard" than the reality of this American gentleman's appearance struck terror into ours. The mayor and the American gentleman engaged us, "yard-arm and yard-arm." Their cross-examination was worse than a raking fire. We had only to repeat our former story. At last our unlucky genius, the American gentleman, plainly stated to us that they suspected us to be Englishmen—which we had no means of disproving. The mayor added that we were to be committed to the prison of Boulogne until the authorities heard from the American consul at Paris, or until they were thoroughly convinced of the veracity of our statement. These were disastrous "untils"; and it struck me that if they waited for the alternative of them, we might remain in gaol to eternity.

The result was, what less sanguine and less interested men might have anticipated—we were to be ordered to a dungeon, under an escort of *gendarmerie.* The brigadier, who seemed to have all the hundred eyes of Argus condensed into two, asked if we had been searched. The answer

was in the negative. "Search them instantly," cried he; "and," he added, "depend upon it they are Englishmen, who have escaped from one of the depots." The fellows were obedient to command, and we were immediately put under as severe a scrutiny as ever man was subjected to. I was the first person to be rummaged. My pocket-book was opened, and in it were several English letters, with other papers equally calculated to disprove the veracity of my being an American captain shipwrecked at Marseilles. My resource was to say that my pocket-book belonged to a cousin who had perished with the wreck. On the others were found maps of the departments that we had gone through, with several other papers, which identified us to be what they suspected.

However, we still persisted in being Americans. They remonstrated on the folly of such an imposition, and ordered us into a dungeon, assuring us that we should be now very roughly treated, and considered as dangerous people; whereas a frank confession might cause some mitigation. After a little deliberation we clearly perceived the inutility of holding out; so we at once acknowledged who and what we were. The brigadier assured us that he had been confident from the moment he first saw us that we were English, and he would now do everything in his power to comfort us under our present embarrassments, but he had no superior officer of his corps nearer than Boulogne, where he should send us the next day; and for that night he would allow us to go to an inn to get ourselves a little in order, but with a strong escort; and we should be obliged to provide that escort with every necessary, and to pay the men six livres (five shillings) each for the night. This we readily agreed to. Once

more we were prisoners: our state of mind was truly miserable.

At the inn we bought a new shirt and pair of stockings each, and got our old ones, which were in a sad condition, washed and mended. They supplied us with tolerably good beds, of which we were extremely anxious to take possession. After supper we were in the act of going to bed, when an order came, from the commanding officer of a camp adjacent, to conduct us to his tent—which was quickly put into execution. He appeared, in manners, the reverse of the general character of the French. He perused all my letters, which were of no consequence to any one existing except myself,—and which were never returned to me,—and declared he was certain we had emissaries on the coast, otherwise we could never have attempted so perilous a journey. This was, at least, a compliment to our daring enterprise; and when we assured him that we had had no connection whatever with the people on the coast, he replied with a "Bah!" and concluded with an "Ah! the fishermen on our coast, unfortunately, are too much attached to the English."

Our conversation terminated, and we were taken back to our inn. Distressed as we were, we immediately retired to rest our wearied limbs. Nature was exhausted; and we sank into nature's balm—"sweet sleep,"—too afflicted and worn out to reflect, or to care for the reflection that the dawn would see us in progress to gaol.

CHAPTER VII

Our entrance into the gaol of Boulogne—Tantalising sight of Old England's flag and white cliffs—A gaoler's supper and a conscientious bill—Another examination—The route to Verdun—Arras—The gaoler kind, and the commandant full of indulgence—Bapaume—The baker, and inquiries for our lost money—Cambray—Cateau-Cambresis and its horrible dungeon—Landrecies—Our awkwardness in chains, handcuffs, and fetters—My dislike to them—Avesnes—Information that we were to be shot—The dungeon of Avesnes—A dungeon companion who had killed and cut up both his parents—A night of horrors and lunacy—Hirson, a town without a gaol, but with a dungeon—A supper and its consequences—The discovery of our implements of escape—Maubert Fontaine—A new dungeon and a fellow-prisoner—Reciprocal services—A novel mode of hiding pistol-barrels—Chaining prisoners to a cart—Mezières—Arrival at Verdun—Separated from my companions—Reflections on being shot—A close examination—Questioned in relation to Buonaparte—Allowed to join my old associates—Another cross-examination—A recommittal to prison—Our fate determined—The dungeon of Bitche—The Rev. Lancelot C. Lee, a *détenu*—His generosity.

The next morning, the 19th Sept. 1807, at eight o'clock, our *gendarme* escort entered the inn, and, soon placing us in a cart, conducted us to Boulogne. We arrived at about two in the afternoon, and were unceremoniously handed over to a regular gaoler, a Mons. Verjuis, who gave us in custody to one of his most expert turnkeys. The fellow showed us into our apartment. Shortly after,

two small sheaves of straw were sent us as substitutes for beds, and a bucket of water accompanied them, as our sole refreshment. Tuthill, astonished at this supply, asked me seriously what it could mean? I replied, that it was evidently to be our food, and that they thought straw for Englishmen a good substitute for bread!! However, complaint would only have subjected us to ridicule or insult, and without a murmur we drank our water and reposed upon our straw. We had passed many days when the straw would have been a luxury to us, and many nights and days when we would have given a stream of gold for the draught of water.

This day's excursion had afforded us a view of that formidable flotilla which had so frequently threatened to hurl destruction upon our little island; but with what different emotions did we catch the view of the white cliffs of Dover, and behold an English frigate and lugger blockading the French port. The sight of our country, and of the triumphant flag of our glorious profession—the navy of England,—filled us with desires that were not to be realised, and with hopes in which it was tantalising and vain to indulge. I was a little relieved by a feeling of contempt at the dismantled and decaying flotilla, and by reflecting that had France had the folly to build a thousand times as many flat-bottomed boats as I then beheld, she never could have made any impression on our happy country.

However, neither sentiment nor reflection can be a substitute for food, and the keenness of our appetites soon taught us the absolute necessity of becoming acquainted with our *good host.* We began to supplicate for relief through the iron bars; and our experience of the

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French character had taught us the good policy of accompanying each supplication with an assurance that we would pay liberally for whatever we might be supplied with. At length, this man of iron bars and gratings thought proper to pay us a visit. He promised to afford us relief, and we soon got supplied tolerably well with food, and had two mattresses brought us—we still keeping our promise to pay whatever was required. It appeared that this fellow was a great acquisition to Buonaparte's government: he had been originally a convict sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in chains; he therefore resided in a gaol, and wore small silver chains round his wrists and ankles, and thus literally conformed to his sentence, whilst he was placed in a situation under government.

On Monday the 21st we were conducted to the captain of *gendarmes* to undergo another examination; and he behaved very like a gentleman. We were interrogated separately. He said that our attempt to gain our liberty was very laudable, and that he felt for our misfortunes. Our march back was to commence the next morning. He exhorted us to have fortitude and patience, and dwelt very much on the cruelty of not having an exchange of prisoners between the two countries. We returned him many thanks for his goodness, and were escorted back to our prison, where we made every necessary arrangement within our power for the next day. This was a task neither difficult nor long, for our luggage or apparel was not calculated to cause us much embarrassment.

On Tuesday, 22nd Sept., we were called betimes by the guard, and in a few minutes were once more *en route*. The day was excessively wet and the roads heavy, which prevented the guards from chaining us, more especially as we had a

very long march to Montreuil, which was twelve or thirteen leagues distant. About five in the afternoon we were placed in the common gaol of Montreuil, which we found a tolerably comfortable prison; but the gaoler and his wife imposed upon us in a shameful manner.

Our route was now through Hesdin and St. Pol, to Arras. The gaoler here behaved with kindness and civility to us, and (with the exception of one) was the most humane man in that situation I ever knew. And in dire necessity of his humanity were we all at this moment; but more especially myself, for so completely knocked up was I from excessive fatigue and exhaustion, by the length of this day's journey in chains, that I found my head quite dizzy, and had actually swooned and fallen against the prison walls before the gaoler could conduct me to my cell.

The commandant was also extremely civil, and allowed us, at our own request, a chaise, with an escort of two *gendarmes* (whose names were Potdevin and Pasdevie), to Cambray. Having passed through Bapaume, we called at our old friend the baker's, where Mr. Essel supposed he had lost his money. He and his children were severally examined; but we could not discover the smallest trace that might lead us to suppose he had taken it: and I must confess I believed the baker to be innocent. At Cambray we dismissed, or, rather, the Arras escort quitted us; and we were conducted to Cateau-Cambresis, where we were put into a most horrible dungeon under ground, nor could anything in our power have any effect on the flint-hearted keeper of it. We fortunately remained but twenty-four hours at this place; thence we were conducted to Landrecies, where we were permitted to stop and get

a breakfast. Our landlady here shed tears at seeing us handcuffed in so cruel a manner; yet, in spite of all remonstrances and entreaties, and notwithstanding the obvious inutility of this caution or harshness, our guards would not unshackle a single wrist during the whole time, and the people of the house were literally obliged to feed us.

At about five o'clock on the 29th, we arrived at Avesnes, and were very rudely thrust into the gaol, and placed amongst the worst and lowest class of criminals that it contained. This, we were informed, was by the special order of General Wirion, who, it appeared, had sent an express to all stages on our route, desiring that we should be treated as severely and as indignantly as possible. Our guard seemed to be by no means lax in discipline, for they fulfilled their instructions both to their spirit and letter. A report, moreover, was current at this place, that we were English spies, about to be shot for having been hired to inspect the naval armaments along the French coast. This idea certainly did not procure us the sympathies of the populace, nor did it seem to soften the tempers of our conductors; and all assurances to the contrary on our part were rendered abortive by the fact of our being so heavily manacled, shackled, and loaded with chains. The conclusions from these symbols of guilt were that if we were not spies we were something even worse. What were our disgust and horror when we found that we were thrust into a horrible dungeon with a wretch that was condemned to perpetual imprisonment for having murdered and mutilated both his father and mother! I shuddered every time I beheld this monster, and could not bear his gaze upon me. I was told that the wretch had

cut both of his parents into quarters, and had buried them in a pit. Never shall I forget the joy we all felt when at daybreak we were taken from this horrible society. I expressed my astonishment that crimes so heinous should not receive the punishment of death; and then it was, and not till then, that the solution was made clear to me —the unhappy man, upon his trial, had been declared a lunatic. I reflected that, as a lunatic, he ought not to be subject to so cruel a confinement. From all I had seen of French gaols, I entertained a very low idea of the prison discipline, economy, and management of France; but the horrors of that night can never be effaced from my mind.

It was about five o'clock, on the 30th of September, that we were halted at the town of Hirson. The town is without a gaol, but it possessed a little damp, subterranean cell, or dungeon, just capable of containing the four of us. We were thrust into this *cachot*, or dungeon, and, a little straw being contemptuously thrown upon us, the heavy door was closed, and we were left to the choice of meditation or slumber. We preferred the latter, but vexation made us irritable; when luckily a brigadier of the *gendarmerie*—who, with two *gendarmes*, constituted the police of the village—showed his face at the little hole in the door of the dungeon, and informed us that the gaoler's wife would procure us some sort of refreshment, provided we would pay her, and pay her in advance. This we not only agreed to immediately, but we found our hearts bounding at the intelligence, and we most humbly and gratefully thanked this brigadier for his excessive goodness and condescension. We were soon informed that there was a kind of repast prepared for us, and that we should have permission to go out into the gaoler's house during

the few minutes necessary to refresh ourselves. This intelligence threw us into great confusion, as we had been unaccustomed to such an indulgence, and, in consequence, had neglected to conceal in some secret hole a number of small articles, such as files and gimlets, which we fortunately had hitherto kept in our possession. The moment they were about to open our door, one preferred keeping what tools he had about him, another slipped his in amongst the straw, and in this perplexed state the dungeon was opened and we were ordered out. At this instant I flung from me, over a high garden wall, two small files which I had concealed in my hand when the dungeon door was opened. I protest I thought the things left in the straw were best secured, as the place was excessively dark. We were now seated at table with some soup and *bouilli*, in great consternation, surrounded by the *gendarmes* and gaoler. In a few minutes the latter procured a candle and lanthorn, and informed the brigadier he was ready to attend him. He accordingly rose, and they proceeded to the miserable abode we had just quitted. An opinion of our feelings at that moment can only be formed by those unfortunate people who have experienced similar sufferings and anxiety. I can only say that our relish for the soup was not very great; we were well assured that everything left in the straw would inevitably be discovered, which most certainly would lead to a general search of our persons. The brigadier's generosity was now sufficiently accounted for: he and his companion returned; and, as we expected, they had found every single tool, together with the stock of a double-barrelled pistol—of which I had given charge to Essel, keeping the barrels in my own possession, and another of the same description, with its

barrels also. They made very diligent search for the barrels of Essel's pistol-stock, but without effect. We assured them that we threw the barrels away prior to our quitting Verdun; and that we had taken the stock and lock to use occasionally instead of a tinder-box, which we had no possibility of providing. They began to search us now separately: a few things were found upon my comrades; but, fortunately for me, they did not discover upon my person my pistol, which was more complete than that which they had found, nor the barrels belonging to Essel's pistol-stock, nor, in fact, anything whatever. Poor Ashworth was less fortunate, for out of the seams of his greatcoat they took two files. They next cut open every covered button, thinking one or all of them might contain some coin; but in this, I have no doubt, they were most mortified and chagrined to be mistaken. The brigadier could hardly convince himself that my walking-stick, which I purchased after leaving Boulogne, did not conceal a sword or dagger. He kept twisting it about and tugging at it, all in vain, and yet so suspicious was he that he chose to keep it for the night. We were reconducted to our den in a state of feeling which can scarcely be conceived. In a few minutes we endeavoured to take what repose we could.

Awaking about midnight, I began to deliberate upon the consequence of having so dangerous a "tinder-box" about me, with all its necessary materials, *i.e.* ammunition; and, having found what I thought was a convenient place —a hole in the dungeon wall—I deposited the barrels of Essel's pistol therein, keeping about me still my own complete. The night went off without further disturbance.

At daylight we were again put *en route*—chained, handcuffed, and closely, even maliciously, watched. The day was very rainy, the roads very bad and heavy; our march was long and fatiguing; and I cannot say that our minds were in the best possible state to cheer us through our sufferings.

It was on the 1st of October, about six in the evening, that we arrived at Maubert Fontaine. Never were poor prisoners in a more miserable plight. We were saturated with rain, and covered with mud. We found that a new dungeon had been built in this village, and into it we were rudely thrust. What the old dungeon might have been, I do not know, but our *domicile* proved to me that the French could not have made much progress in the art of constructing dungeons. It was a wretched place. A boy, of about ten years old, had been confined in it for six or seven days; he belonged to the neighbouring town of Lille, and was imprisoned for having strolled from home without a passport. The poor little fellow informed us that his food had been nothing but black bread and water; and he stated, not much to my satisfaction, that our arrival had been expected for two or three days, and that we were to be searched most strictly. This boy was of the greatest service to me, and, with his assistance, I contrived to conceal my double-barrelled pistol, or, as I termed it, my tinder-box. I unscrewed the barrels, and, thrusting them into the fingers of my gloves, I kept the glove on, with the fingers bent towards the wrist, so that the pistol-barrels were mistaken for my fingers straight out. The boy helped me to conceal the stock, just as the guard entered to search us. We had nothing else about us now, except our money, which had hitherto been respected, and

a small gold watch which I wore, and which they fortunately did not discover. I purchased this watch at Verdun, and wear it even to the present day. We were searched with great strictness and severity; and such were the feelings against us that the guard deprived us of all our money, and, upon our remonstrating, they replied that they would pay out of it all our expenses to Verdun, and account for the balance to General Wirion, at that depot. The reader may easily imagine with what sort of good faith the account was kept, and the amount that remained to be paid to the General. However, this night the guard provided for us, out of our money, what they called a supper; and they procured for us some straw and blankets, which were our only beds. The poor French boy felt himself perfectly happy in having, as he termed it, "something good" to eat. We gave the poor little fellow an ample share of everything that was brought to us; and if he felt the luxury of the unexpected repast, we likewise felt "the greater luxury of doing good." The guards gaped and stared at the unusual scene; and, after muttering their *parbleus* and *sacrés*, they shrugged up their shoulders and expressed their astonishment at our generosity. I only wished that generosity was contagious, and that our rapacious, stone-hearted temporary keepers might imbibe our feelings.

The guard visited us every hour during the night; notwithstanding which, I contrived to find an opportunity of getting rid of all the materials of my dangerous "tinder-box," excepting the barrels.

At daybreak, 2nd October, we were handcuffed and chained to a cart, the roads having become too heavy to admit of our proceeding on foot; and here I got rid of

the barrels, by wrapping a little straw round each and dropping them through the cart in the mud.

In the evening we arrived at Mezières gaol, and were put into the yard, after being strictly searched; nor could we procure even a dungeon until we had agreed to pay a most exorbitant price which the gaoler charged for some refreshments that he had procured for us. He very laconically observed, "I know the *gendarmes* have plenty of money which they took from you. You may as well let me have part, as let *them* have all. You will not stand in need of any in a few days;" thus intimating that we were to be shot as spies, which was the general opinion everywhere.

Our treatment was pretty nearly the same throughout all the way to Verdun, where we arrived at the latter end of October. I was then separated from my companions, being considered as the *chef du complot*, and was thrown into a miserable dungeon, in which was another prisoner, supposed to have been a spy, and who expected to be brought to trial in a few days, and with no great confidence of being tried with a superfluous regard to justice or mercy. The universal impression that we were to be shot, with which our ears had been dinned at every resting-place upon the road, seemed confirmed by the companion with whom they placed me in this dungeon. I was certain that if only one of the party was to suffer death, that victim would be myself—not only because it is the custom in France to infer that the oldest of a party or gang is the ringleader, or *chef du complot*, but my conscience told me that I had really been the chief instigator to all that we had done. I made my mind up to bear the execution with a fortitude and dignity that should not

disgrace the naval service or national character of my country; I trusted in God that my death would satiate French vengeance, and that my brave companions would be allowed to escape; and finally, in the perfect resignation which I felt to my approaching fate, I was consoled by my conscience telling me that I had committed no crime that merited so sanguinary and ignominious a punishment. I laid my hand upon my heart, and felt that I had done nothing to tarnish the honour of a naval officer and a gentleman.

At daybreak a guard came to conduct me to the place of examination. Here I found Lieutenant Demangeoit, of the *gendarmerie*, a scrivener, and Mr. Galliers, interpreter. This Lieutenant Demangeoit was afterwards dismissed from the Emperor's service. My examination continued two or three hours; every question and answer was noted down, and as much form and solemnity as possible were given to the proceedings. I was minutely cross-examined with respect to the pistol-stock, and was sifted over and over again, with both earnestness and cunning, as to where I had been on the days Buonaparte had passed through Verdun. I was interrogated as to what company I had been in, with whom I had breakfasted; and numberless other questions were put to me, without my being able to form the slightest idea of what they suspected or at what object they were aiming. However, it was clear that I was suspected of some offence in relation to the Emperor, and it was certain that there was a determination, if possible, to implicate me in it. Our companion Essel had on that morning given a public breakfast to several of his friends at his lodgings, which happened to be situated immediately in the

thoroughfare, or most public part of the town, *La Place St. Croix*, and close to the windows of which Napoleon and suite must of necessity have passed. Of this circumstance I was ignorant, consequently had no invitation, which at this moment, for me, proved a fortunate event, and evidently explained the cause of this strict and scrutinising examination.

M. le Lieutenant Demangeoit appeared also particularly anxious to ascertain whether my pistols had been purchased previous or subsequent to the breakfast on the day of Buonaparte passing through Verdun. This was evidently done with the intention of, if possible, fixing upon us—but more especially upon me, to whom the articles in question belonged—the atrocious and abominable stigma of a conspiracy and premeditated design to assassinate their Emperor: for whom, however formidable my dislike might have been to the *chief* of the avowed foes of my country, I entertained not the slightest feeling of personal vindictive animosity. They very much wanted to be informed by whom we had been supplied with ropes, and who had assisted us in descending the ramparts. I replied, "That, by degrees, we had procured sufficient rope for the purpose of horse-collars, and of course *twice* the length that would have been necessary had we had a friend to assist us in descending by holding it fast; but we had to place the bight over a rock which I knew stood near the place, and then went down by the double part; after which we hauled it to us, cut it to pieces, and threw it into the Meuse."

I went through all this raking and cross-fire of examination with patience and humility; but, the ordeal being over, I began to remonstrate at the unnecessary cruelty of

being separated from my companions. At last it was decided that I should be conducted to their prison, *La Tour d'Angoulême*, they having been removed from it to the place of examination. We were not allowed to see each other until the whole examination was over; but, in passing the guard-room in which they were locked up, I heard their voices, and vociferated to them, "Mind you stick to the old text:" a hint they very well understood. This exasperated the guard, who insisted upon knowing what I had said; but I simply replied, "That I had only said that I was very hungry and wanted my breakfast:" with which he seemed perfectly satisfied. I need not describe the joy we all felt upon being once more together.

We amused ourselves the whole night in talking over the different questions that had been put to each of us; for it had long been our practice to suggest every possible question to which we might be probably exposed, in the event of our being captured, and to agree upon the answers we should make, in order that neither equivocation nor inconsistencies might undo us. The gaoler (Monsieur Percival) supplied us, out of our own funds, with the nourishment that was permitted by the laws of prison discipline. Fire and candle were prohibited.

Some days had elapsed, when we were again conducted to be examined separately. I was the first called into court. The lieutenant (Demangeoit) informed me that there had been certain questions transmitted from the minister at Paris to be put to me, and to which it would be to my interest to give candid answers. In the first place, he was certain that we never could have kept a direct course through the long and difficult route from Verdun to Étaples without guides, especially as it appeared that we

had had neither chart nor compass. We had luckily destroyed the compass, and no chart had been found upon us, with the exception of the maps of the departments at Étaples, so I coolly replied, "That English sailors could always steer with sufficient correctness by the stars, and that when those celestial objects were visible they were never at a loss."

When this question was disposed of, the court wished to be informed, "Whether I knew anything of the coast of France, and whether I had ever been stationed off it?" It struck me that the shipwreck of the *Hussar* was a pretty clear proof that there was one part of the coast, at least, of which it would appear we had but an imperfect knowledge; but, smiling at the question, I replied, "That every naval officer of England was by far better acquainted with the French coast than even with his own." I mollified this allusion to our blockading every port of France, and triumphantly sailing round her coasts, by adding, "That we could hardly go up and down Channel without acquiring a knowledge of the northern coast of France;" and at length I left no doubt on their minds with respect to our local knowledge of it. The questions were the same to all the rest, and we were then again reconducted to our prison.

In a week we were ordered to prepare ourselves for a march to the fortress of Bitche, in Lorraine, a wretched place, well known to many of our unhappy countrymen; a place in the dreadful caverns of which many a valuable British subject had terminated his existence in all the agony that illness, despondency, and ill-usage could create. This was my transition from the expected fate of being shot. And here, in some wretched *souterrain*, we were to remain during the war; nay, they even asserted that it

was Buonaparte's own decree. Death was preferable to such a sentence; but we were resolved to make another effort at all risks, and, if possible, to regain our liberty. Cash alone was wanting. I, however, procured a small supply through the interposition of a worthy countryman, notwithstanding the strict guard that was kept over us. My Samaritan, or friend in need, was the Rev. C. Launcelot Lee (a *détenu*), Fellow of New College, Oxford, from whom I had at all times received great kindness. He contrived now to assist me in my extreme distress, by giving the money to Mr. Galliers, another worthy Englishman, who had acted as our interpreter. The object was effected dexterously; for Mr. Galliers, in taking leave, at the moment of our setting out for Bitche, when surrounded by the *gendarmes*, cordially gave me his hand to shake, and pressed the precious treasure into mine. I was obliged to keep this act of generosity a profound secret; for, had it been discovered, it would have been of serious consequences to my two friends.

CHAPTER VIII

Our departure from Verdun for Bitche—Mars-la-Tour, Metz, and Sarrelouis—I receive a very useful present from Mr. Brown—Sarreguemines—A last chance—A mounted guard—Thoughts of an escape—Calculations upon a chase in a wood between horse-soldiers and prisoners on foot—Attempt resolved upon—Signal given—Flight from the prison caravan to the wood—French pursuit—A prisoner recaptured—My escape from the wood into another—My companions, I fear, less fortunate—My concealment—A swampy bed, and a stormy sky, with a torrent of rain, for a canopy—A prospective flight of nearly 800 miles—The misery of a fruitless search for lost companions—Feeding on haws, and herding with quadrupeds and vermin—A hut discovered—Hunger compels me to enter—A compromise, a bribe, female advocacy, and an escape—On the road to the Rhine—A preparation to sell life dearly—A narrow escape—Living on cabbage-stalks and raw turnips—Bad feet and worse health—A lonely house near a wood—Strong temptations to enter—A brutal host, extreme danger, and a narrow escape—Bad specimens of human nature.

On the morning of our departure we were joined by eight culprits at twilight, and were placed in a large waggon, under a very strong escort of *gendarmerie*, with a brigadier to command it. We were confined the first night in a most miserable dungeon, in a village called Mars-la-Tour. It was so very small, and there were so many of us, that we could scarcely breathe. Our allowance of straw, *a pound and a half each*, was given us to lie on: this straw

was so short that it had exactly the appearance of so many bundles of toothpicks. The following night we were lodged in Metz gaol. We remained here several days. At last an order came for half our number to proceed towards our destination: two others, with us four, were accordingly commanded to get ready. We were now in the hope of having another chance of getting out of the clutches of our keepers, but were much mistaken; our guard watched us closely, and we were so well secured with handcuffs and with chains that it was impossible to attempt it. We were therefore safely lodged in Sarrelouis gaol. This was a depot for captured seamen, and one of punishment for officers who might transgress prison rules; but it was many degrees superior to Bitche. Several of our countrymen obtained permission to see us; and from one (Mr. Brown, master of H.M. gun-brig *Mallard*, lately wrecked on the coast) I received a small map of Germany, torn out of an old book of geography, which I carefully stitched in the lining of my waistcoat. We were now joined by those left in Metz prison, and were soon again on the march towards our destined habitation. The same precautions were taken for securing us, and but little or no hopes were left of our escaping. We arrived at Sarreguemines, only six or seven leagues from Bitche, and were secured, as usual, in the gaol. The next day, at about four in the afternoon, we expected to arrive at our horrible abode. In the morning our guards came with a large waggon, in which we were placed, and, to my great astonishment and delight, we were not chained. I considered this as a most wonderful circumstance, and as a favourable opportunity of escape that ought to be embraced, particularly as there could be no hopes of any

other chance; indeed, it appeared an interposition of Divine Providence in our favour. I communicated my intentions to my companions; and, after we had got out of the town, we descended from our waggon, observing to the guards that we preferred walking a little. Mr. Essel remained in the waggon. Messrs. Ashworth and Tuthill, and Baker, of the merchant service, with myself, were walking ahead of the waggon. We had not got more than two or three miles when I discovered a wood at about one hundred and fifty yards from the road: our guards were about fifty yards behind us, and were on horseback. In so unequal a chase, a chase between man and horse, we might be overtaken in our run to the wood; but if we could once reach that point, we were safe, for, although there were no leaves on the trees, we were certain that our mounted guards could not pursue us without a great deal of difficulty, owing to the branches and underwood; and, should they dismount, accoutred as they were, and with their heavy boots, we knew that we could outrun them with the greatest ease.

At length the most interesting and anxious moment arrived. We were on the spot where the attempt could be made better than at any other. I gave my friends the signal—a loud cheer. Away we ran: the startled guards dug their spurs into their horses, and galloped at our heels with the utmost speed. The ground was very heavy, a ploughed field being the space between the road and wood. Poor Baker fell, and was instantly seized and conducted back to the waggon with a sabre over him, and a pistol ready to do its office, should he attempt again to escape. We were more fortunate. We got into the wood, dodging the *gendarmes* through brier, brake, and

Escape of the Author and his Companions.

entanglement. I and my companions crossed each other several times, out of breath, and I could barely cry to them to keep behind trees and avoid pistol-shots; for the guards were leaping, plunging, and riding in all directions, roaring out, in the greatest rage, the words, "*Arrêtez, coquins!*" etc. These not very agreeable epithets, in hoarse French, assailed our ears from every point. At length my pursuers gave up the chase of me to follow my companions; and, fortunately, finding a good tree between me and the foe, I sat down to catch my breath and consider what I should do. The moment I lost sight of the *gendarmes*, I bounded towards the side of the wood opposite to the direction they had taken, and I perceived an extensive plain, terminating in one direction in a wood, which seemed not much more than a mile off. Without any more deliberation I darted into the plain; its extent was about a mile; and by the time I had reached the middle I was so out of breath that I was obliged to stop a few minutes, and I therefore fell flat on my face, with my mouth open, and close to the earth; and the relief was astonishing. I lay close to the ground, that I might not be discovered. However, another run brought me to the wood. Having thus far so providentially escaped, I began to consider what steps I had better take next; and, after resting a few minutes again to recover my exhausted strength, I determined on quitting this wood, and at the extremity opposite to that at which I calculated my pursuers might be looking out for me, as I thought they would naturally take that direction, when a diligent search had convinced them that I was not in the wood into which we had first entered. Besides, I saw that the first wood was now entirely surrounded by the peas-

antry; for, it being Sunday, all had been idle, and men, women, and children caught the alarm, and hurried like wolves to the chase. The French Government at this time gave a reward of fifty livres, or £2. 1s. 8d., to any person who should recapture a prisoner of war that had escaped from prison or from an escort, and this brought out such a prodigious concourse of eager people, as to leave me but very little hope of remaining in safety in any place where it could be even suspected that a man might be concealed.

On quitting this wood I conjectured that I was about three or four miles from the road from which I had at first escaped. Immense plains, stubble ground, meadows, fields fallow and ploughed, presented themselves to my view, with the river Sarre close to the southward of me, but extremely rapid, and no part of it fordable. My case appeared desperate; and, to avoid suspicion, I thought the best method would be to walk deliberately across those plains, taking a different direction from that of every other person in them, but without appearing to avoid any. I put a night-cap on, which I had in my pocket, instead of the beaver-cap I usually wore—the night-cap being a common dress with the peasantry of Lorraine. I passed several of them at very short distances, stopping frequently, and seeming to walk very carelessly. At length I found myself in a small vale, through which ran two small rivulets, forming a little kind of island, that was covered with one hawthorn-bush, briers, etc., sufficiently large to conceal one man. This I considered admirably well calculated for a hiding-place; for, as it was so excessively small and wet, I was of opinion nobody would even think of searching it. I entered it, and was so completely

covered as to be scarcely able to discern the part through which I had first penetrated. I found it in one sense very uncomfortable—I mean with respect to the mud, wet, and dirt that I was obliged to wallow in; but otherwise it was a perfect paradise to me; and all I regretted was not having my poor comrades somewhere near me, although I comforted myself in feeling assured that they must all have escaped, even those who did not run in the beginning, as they were left with only the waggoner, the guards having gone in pursuit of us. I was, indeed, some time afterwards informed that not one of the remaining eight ever attempted to quit the waggoner, but were quietly conducted to Bitche, where, as the reader will find, I was again compelled to rejoin them.[1]

This was Sunday, 15th November 1807, and I lay cold and quietly enough in my wet and muddy bed, anxiously wishing night to arrive, and dispel part of my apprehensions. I was obliged frequently to shift from one side to the other, the cold and moisture becoming extremely severe and distressing. In a short time I was wet through in every part of my body, and found the cold intense, for when I lay down in the mud I was in a profuse state of perspiration. It did not relieve my miseries to hear either the alarm-bells ringing in the adjacent villages, or the whistling, howling, and shouting of the peasantry: what was still worse, I was frequently startled by voices close to me.

But now the much-desired moment of darkness drew

[1] Ashworth and Tuthill, as we shall see, were recaptured by the *gendarmes* almost immediately. They were sent to Bitche and shared O'Brien's captivity there. Ultimately they escaped, though not in our hero's company, and made their way, like him, to Trieste, where they reached an English ship.

near: the sun was descending; but, to my great discomfiture and mortification, with every appearance of bad weather. It already began to rain very hard, which obscured the moon, then about eight or nine days old. Reflecting on my present state, I found it truly pitiable. I had only the small old map I have already mentioned, to direct my course; and I was without compass, guide, clothes, meat, drink, or companion, and the dreary month of November was setting in with more than its usual inclemency. The nearest friendly town was Salzburg, in Austria, and that was between seven and eight hundred miles distant. This was enough to chill the ardour and paralyse the exertions of the most dauntless; nevertheless, my having escaped from the grasp of tyrants, and become my own master, more than compensated, in my estimation, for a thousand hardships, sufferings, and dangers.

About half-past seven I ventured out, shook, cleaned, and washed the mud off my clothes as well as I could, and recommending myself to a merciful Creator, by whose bountiful clemency I had been this day so miraculously protected, I proceeded with great caution towards the wood in which I had separated from my companions, for I supposed that they would keep in it, or perhaps return there to meet me. It rained very hard, and everything was profoundly silent. I traversed the woods for three or four miles in different directions; but all to no purpose. Now and then I ventured to whistle, which was the signal formerly established amongst us, but all without success. I remained alone, dispirited, hungry, cold, fatigued, and drenched with rain. The risk was too great to venture on the high-road; and yet I was so nearly perishing with

cold and wet that it was impossible to remain in my place of concealment. I therefore kept running and walking onward during the night, frequently impeded by the course of the Sarre, which confused me greatly. At length, being very much fatigued, and finding a convenient wood, though destitute of leaves, I got into it, and concealed myself in a tolerably good part, a little before daylight. I never recollect feeling or suffering so much from cold: it had rained incessantly all this day. The whole of this day (the 16th) I was surrounded by moles, rats, and other small animals somewhat like squirrels; the rats often approached so near as to lick my shoes. Their tricks and advances rather amused me, and abated in some measure the lowness and disquietude of my mind. At the close of the evening a swineherd passed by, conducting his hogs near my hiding-place. I saw him very distinctly. One of the pigs took flight exactly towards me: he sent his dog in pursuit of it; which, providentially, turned it back, otherwise it would have absolutely run over me.

About eight o'clock I quitted my retreat. The night was again very bad. It kept blowing and raining very hard, and I was at a loss to know what direction to take; for never did darker and thicker clouds obscure the light of heaven. About nine o'clock I discovered a small hut, and I imagined that I had an opportunity of endeavouring to procure a morsel of food of some kind. I reconnoitred it with a trembling earnestness, and at last most cautiously approached the door. The struggle between my eager desire to procure some sustenance, without which I must perish, and the dread of being arrested in the attempt, may be conceived, but cannot be described. After deliberating some length of time, hunger preponderated over even

the dread of my being again led to my dungeon; and, with a trembling hand, I at length knocked at the door. It was opened by a woman. I humbly asked for some bread in German, which is the language spoken by the peasantry of Lorraine. She made signs for me to enter, which I did.

There were three men and another woman in the house. An elderly man, who was the only one of the party that could speak French, instantly told me, "He was certain that I was one of the English prisoners who had escaped from the guard on the preceding day." He added, "That one of the guard had just quitted the hut: he had been in search of the fugitives all day, and had called on his way home to give the present company information." I did not dispute who or what I was. The fellow proceeded to dwell on the reward of *fifty livres* which the Government gave for arresting a prisoner of war. "*Fifty livres*," he added, "was an object to poor people like them." I perfectly understood his drift, and merely observed, "That, although the Government promised the reward, they were not certain when it might be paid." I afterwards appealed to his honour and feelings, and asked him, "What honest man, for so paltry a recompense or amount, would prevent a poor prisoner of war, who had been guilty of no crime whatever, from revisiting his wife, and everything that was dear to him, after a close imprisonment for four or five years?" He explained all that I had said to the others; and I found that the women took my views of the subject, and were advocates for me. Upon this, I addressed the old man again, and said, "As you appear to me to be very worthy, honest people, accept of this trifle amongst you;" and I gave him a *louis d'or*. I next pre-

sented the women with six livres, as a mark of my respect for them, and they received the money very graciously. I saw that matters now bore, or were beginning to bear, a favourable aspect, and I accordingly took the first favourable opportunity to assure them how very sorry I was that I had not more money to give them. I next requested that they would show me the nearest way to Bitche, as I had friends there who would supply me with a little cash to enable me to proceed on my long journey. After a long discussion in German, during which I perfectly discovered their uneasiness at not having received more than thirty livres, the old man observed, "As there is but one of them, it is of no great consequence; but if they all were here, it would have been well worth while." I could not help thinking to myself that if we had all been present we should have been such an over-match for them as to prevent their making the attempt, and I might have kept my money in my pocket. I again repeated my wish to be directed towards Bitche. I knew that there was a direct road from Bitche to the Rhine, and this was my reason for wishing to go that way. The women again pleaded in my favour, and at length the two young men got up and offered their services. I accepted the offer, and they equipped themselves, and announced that they were ready. I took a most joyful leave of the women and old man, and followed my guides, inexpressibly rejoiced at getting out of this danger; though I did not consider myself perfectly safe whilst I remained with these men.

My suspicions and alarm grew stronger and stronger; for they conducted me through very narrow, intricate ways, through deserted places, and over heaths and commons; and they generally kept behind me; while I

observed they were always whispering together. I had, at the best, no great opinion of them; and these circumstances were so suspicious that I feigned occasion to remain behind a little while; and this time I occupied in concealing my watch, money, and the small map, all of which had hitherto been in a pocket of my pantaloons. This being done, I advanced, assumed a light and satisfied air, but took good care not again to take the lead of them. About midnight the men left me, on a pathway to the road to Bitche, and took their leave. I felt much pleased at so happy a deliverance, and continued in that direction until about three o'clock; when, supposing myself near enough to that unhappy mansion (Bitche), I directed my course (as I thought) towards the Rhine. Some time before daylight it ceased raining; the stars showed themselves, and I had the mortification of discovering that I had been going diametrically opposite to my proper course.

In this unhappy dilemma I kept advancing, being confident that I had passed no secure retreat. At length, some time after daylight, I discovered a very thin wood on the side of a hill, which I immediately betook myself to, and there I remained until night. Here I managed to get a dry shave. My gold watch, hung upon a bush, was my only looking-glass; but the razor was a tolerably *good one*. There was a drizzling rain the whole of the day, and the cold was extreme.

At night, about the usual time, I commenced my journey, and took the direction back, going over the ground which I had followed the preceding morning; and I confess, notwithstanding my disappointment, I felt some consolation in knowing I was at length in the right track. During the whole of this night, my escapes from being

dashed to pieces by repeated falls down precipices, which the darkness concealed, were quite incredible. About eleven I felt very much harassed, from crossing fields, morasses, gullies, and ditches; and happening to hit the high-road, I resolved to follow it for some time, especially as I thought it my direct way, but could not be certain, as the moon and stars were still obscured. I supposed it was too late for travellers to interrupt me. However, after quitting a wood on the side of the road, whence I had to crawl up a sort of gravel-pit to get on it, imagine my astonishment!—I had no sooner stepped on the road than I was challenged—"*Qui vive?*" ("Who goes there!") in an audible voice, by a *gendarme* on horseback. I made but one jump down the gravel-pit, and crawled thence back into the wood; where I remained for some time to gather strength, being sadly exhausted. I then proceeded along the wood, without having any idea where I was going, the night still very dark, wet, and inclement. I fortunately fell in with a cabbage-garden, close to a cottage near the wood, and ate plentifully, and I stowed a good supply in my pockets for the ensuing day. Afterwards I re-entered the wood, in which I remained all day. After dark I recommenced my journey. This was the most severe night, if possible, I had yet experienced: the roads, pathways, and fields were deep and heavy from the constant rains; rivulets had become dangerous rivers, and I had to wade through several. I had an opportunity again this night of feasting upon cabbage-stalks, leaves, and turnips, and filled my pockets plentifully.

My feet now began to blister and to get very sore; and I was likewise becoming emaciated and very weak—it being my fifth day of living upon cabbage leaves, stalks,

and raw turnips. In my first attempt at flight our food used to be occasionally nuts, apples, and grapes; now turnips and cabbages were my only resource.

About half-past two in the morning I perceived a small lonely house on the side of the wood. My necessities induced me to imagine that I might approach it without danger, and endeavour to procure some refreshment. I saw a light in the window, got close to the door, peeped through the keyhole and window alternately, and at last saw a woman spinning by a rousing fire. The effect was electrical. What could be more thrilling to a man in my deplorable state than to behold the cleanly hearth, the blazing fire, and happy industry, amidst the comforts and simple ornaments of the cottage? Oh, how anxiously did I wish to be seated by that brilliant fire! The physical wants of drooping nature prevailed, and seizing the knocker, my astonished ears heard its sound. The door was opened by a man, who surveyed me from top to toe. I was covered all over with mud, nor was there a thread about me that was not saturated with rain. He could clearly perceive from my miserable appearance and woeful aspect that I had been for a long time secluded from my fellow-creatures, and had been doomed to associate, or rather herd, with the animals that inhabit the caves and forests. Whilst the fellow remained with his eyes riveted upon me, I assured him in French that I was thirsty, and asked him if he would have the kindness to give me something to drink. He could not speak French, but he made me understand that he had nothing whatever to give me. I discovered a pail of water, and pointing to it with a supplicating gesture, the churl brought me a ladleful of it. I then took the liberty of sitting down by the fire, though

the inhospitable boor or wife never asked me. I as little liked the appearance of the place as I did that of its brutal owner; and as it presented to my view not a single thing, except the fire, that could be of the slightest service to me, I resolved to take my departure. I asked him the road to Strasbourg, and the reply was that it was close by. I was about to quit the fireside, when a tailor arrived to work for the family. He also began to survey me closely, and having examined me from head to foot, I heard him whisper to the man of the house, and clearly distinguished the words *Engländer* and *Bitche*. In fact, the uncharitable varlet had revealed the truth, that I was an Englishman escaping from Bitche. He then addressed me, and asked if I were a person authorised to travel?—whether I had a passport?—with several other questions of the same tendency.

Exhausted as I was, I saw that boldness in this case was my only buckler; so turning fiercely upon him, I replied that he must be a very impudent fellow to take the liberty of asking such questions,—that I should not condescend to answer an inquisitive gossiping rascal of his description; and I wished to know by what authority he could presume to interrogate me in so unhandsome a manner. The fellow pretended to smile; but he had not expected a retort so vigorous, as I saw evidently that he was disconcerted, if not frightened. I next observed to the landlord that the extreme inclemency of the weather alone had occasioned my stopping at his house, particularly as I had seen neither town, village, nor public-house contiguous to it. I added that as there were no hopes of the weather clearing up, I should continue my road to Strasbourg, which the fellow assured me was twelve

leagues off, whilst Bitche was only three. At this information I was distressed and mortified to find what little progress I had made in so many days, or rather nights. The whole party sat down to breakfast without asking the weather-beaten, way-bewildered stranger to partake of their meal; so he, of course, took his leave of these selfish and unfeeling specimens of human nature; and exchanging the blazing fire for the unpitying elements, he pursued his solitary journey, disgusted that aught so base as what he had witnessed could be found under the human form.

CHAPTER IX

An inclement season—A retreat in a cavern—Somnambulism—The discovery of a shepherd's hut—A traveller put out of a wrong road—Swimming in a winter's night—Passing through a mill—A suspicious traveller may be an honest man—A Lorraine cottage seen through a fog—Dangers from over-kind people—Repugnance to be introduced to a mayor or any other good society—Concealment in a hollow willow—An honest fellow-traveller of fugitive reminiscences—An ingenious fiction—A perspective of Strasbourg.

The inauspicious month of November 1807 seemed to take a malignant cognisance of my enterprises, and to visit me with more than its usual severities. To prevent suspicion, I walked boldly on the road. It rained excessively heavy, and I was sure that nobody who had any possibility of remaining under cover would be in the way to interrupt me. After advancing a short distance, on turning back I observed my *friend* the tailor, with all the rest, watching which way I went. I therefore continued the road until I lost sight of the house, and proceeded, hungry and wet, but tolerably well pleased at getting so well off. I now discovered a high mountain with rocks and pines, contiguous to the road; and I imagined I might find a more hospitable retreat in some cavern amongst those rocks than in the house which my fellow-creatures occupied. Not wishing to remain exposed any

longer on the highway, I scrambled up, and reached the summit. There I found an excellent dry cavern under an immense rock. I crept into it and shortly fell into a profound sleep; in which state I remained until I was disturbed by the grunting of wild hogs that came to banish the unfortunate and forlorn usurper who had so illegally taken possession of their habitation. I found it quite dusk, and about the time I should recommence my journey. I descended on the Strasbourg road, and kept running with little intermission the whole of the night, notwithstanding the excruciating pain I felt from my blistered feet.

About midnight, having halted to listen if there were any noise or footsteps to be heard on the road, I plainly discovered, by the cracking of whips, that a coach or waggon was advancing. I therefore retired a few steps from the roadside and lay close down. It passed, and, as far as I dared to peep at it, appeared to be a diligence, or a very heavy travelling coach. I then resumed my route; kept running on, and passed several villages, until a little before daylight, conjecturing that I could not be far from the Rhine. I secured my lodging in a wood for the ensuing day.

Looking about for the best shelter and accommodation, I perceived a cavern under a rock far above me. It was apparently formed by the hand of nature and time; and the rock, from its stupendous summit, displayed an immense precipice, well calculated to inspire the feelings of awe and admiration which are derived from the view of beautiful and sublime scenery. But I was in no mood to contemplate scenery, or to enjoy either beauty or sublimity. My thoughts were all absorbed in procuring shelter from bitter

cold, from piercing winds and drenching rain, and, from what was worse than all these, the hostile hand of unfeeling man.

I determined, if possible, to scale this alarming height. It was still dark, and this added to my perils and difficulties. In this exertion I climbed on my knees, clinging to roots, clumps of dwarf trees, or to tufts of the thick, coarse herbage; and if a single hold had given way, I must have been dashed to pieces. Panting, and nearly exhausted, I at last reached the top; and recovering my breath, I refreshed myself with the few cabbage stumps which I had procured in passing the villages; and entering the cavern, I threw myself on the ground, and instantly fell into what may be almost called a stupor rather than a sleep.

My spirits were extremely agitated during the whole of the time I was in this lurking-place. I awoke frequently, talking quite loud, and naming the gentlemen that had been my former companions, holding conversation with them as if they were actually present. Some time after I had experienced a short and disturbed repose, I started up all of a sudden, and desired my companions to rise and renew their journey; when, on recovering from my delirium, and looking round, to my inexpressible amazement I discovered than I was actually at the bottom of the precipice, and that it was quite daylight. This precipice was very steep, and, I repeat it, alarmingly dangerous, even to a man with all his senses collected, and in the open day; and how I came again to the bottom of it alive, I am utterly unable to explain. After collecting my scattered ideas, which was no easy task, I hastened into the wood again, for it rained very heavily, and prostrated myself in the most humble, devout, and, I trust, sincere

manner, before the great Disposer of all events, offering up my most earnest and heartfelt thanks for the great mercies and protection so bountifully bestowed upon me on this most marvellous occasion. During this day I crossed several mountains covered with trees, and at length found a very comfortable cave, full of nice dry leaves, on the declivity of a hill. From the continued chain of lofty, wild, and barren mountains that surrounded me, I had very serious apprehensions that this might be the lair of wolves or of some wild beasts; but I entered it, and found it lofty enough to sit upright in. I took off my coat, squeezed out the water, and, after refreshing myself with my usual fare, I lay down on the earth, and covering myself with leaves, and my coat over all, I went to sleep.

About dusk I was awakened by the chattering of a jay at the mouth of the cavern. The image of this bird is now fresh in my recollection, and will remain so as long as I live. I crawled out of this, which proved to me so safe a retreat, shook myself, and put on my wet coat. It had every appearance of a fine night, with an inclination to frost. I consoled myself with the calculation that I could not be more than three leagues from Strasbourg. After descending the mountain, I discovered a peasant's hut in the vale; and, let the danger be what it might, I determined at all hazards to ascertain at this place what was really my distance from the Rhine. I accordingly entered, and found a young man, woman, and child sitting round a fire. Unfortunately they could speak nothing but *patois* German, and I was about to retreat, vexed in the extreme that we were unintelligible to each other; when, just as I was leaving the hut, an old man met me at the door. He stared at me with his eyes full of wonder, and as soon as

he recovered his self-possession he asked me if I were a Frenchman. "Yes," I replied; "and I have missed my way in crossing the mountains; and I will be obliged to you if you will put me *en route* to Strasbourg." The fellow was kind of heart and civil of manners. He put me on the right road, and gave me the names of all the villages I should have to pass through; but my spirits sank within me when he concluded by saying that I was only twelve leagues from Strasbourg. "Twelve leagues!" I exclaimed, with dismay; but I took my leave of this old man, and proceeded, heavy of heart, on my apparently interminable journey. I could not account for this great distance, except on the ground of my having been directed wrong by the former inhospitable wretches that had driven me from their fireside.

My humble hosts on this occasion had nothing to give me to eat, and they really appeared sorry for it; but before my departure they offered me some brandy and water, for which I was grateful, got change for a Napoleon, and paid them liberally.

At this time my feet were so very much swollen and very sore that I could not wear my shoes; but I kept my stockings on until the foot parts of them were worn out, and even then I found their legs of great service in frosty weather. So far from refreshing me, the brandy and water I had taken made me very ill.

The grateful idea of being at last in a fair way of succeeding and overcoming all difficulties began now to be highly cherished. I found myself on an excellent road, got a supply of very fine turnips out of an adjoining garden, and discovered regular posts on the roadside. I kept running all night, with very little intermission,

resolved, at all events, to get near the Rhine before morning. The road continued for about four leagues through a wood. On leaving this wood I was brought to a stand all of a sudden by the walls of a town, which, according to the names I had received from the old man, was Haguenau; but I had never supposed that the road led through it, or that it was walled in. It was also surrounded by a river, which appeared an insurmountable barrier to my proceeding. It required much resolution (owing to the frost) to take to the water; however, there was no alternative, necessity has no law, so I stripped, and, fortunately, swam and waded through one branch of it. On the other branch I observed a mill, with the house built on an arch, so as to let the water flow under it. Upon a strict survey, I perceived that if I could pass this branch, I should be able to make a circuit round the town, and to get clear off. I approached, saw the mill-door open, and the road on the opposite side. I was naked, ready to plunge in this stream as I had into the other, had necessity required it; but I retired to a shelter, put on my clothes, and, with a palpitating heart, I passed through the mill, without hearing any noise but that of the works. The passage seemed to me to be a thoroughfare for the people who brought their corn to be ground, if not for the population generally.

I now walked towards Strasbourg, with the cheering confidence that I was on the proper road. At about half-past three I was a little startled by hearing a man cough at a short distance behind me. I did not quicken my pace; but, on the contrary, in order to avoid suspicion, I rather slackened it. He soon overtook me, saluted me civilly in very broken French, and expressed his surprise

that I had been able to get out of town so early. This was a shrewd, and to me a very unpleasant, observation.

I told my most unwelcome companion that I believed I was the first out of the town that morning. I pretended to be of opinion that it was past five o'clock, and said that I believed it was usual to open the gates of the town about that hour. He rejoined, "That it was more likely to be nearer three than five;" and added, "that he wondered to see me barefooted." I began to dislike the style of conversation exceedingly; but I assumed tranquillity, if I had it not; and I told him I was a soldier, and that, after the severe campaigns we lately had had in Prussia and against the Russians, we were insensible to cold and indifferent to all weathers. He assented to all I said, commending my zeal, and declaring that "we soldiers were wonderful fellows." I was glad to hear him say that he was a butcher, going to purchase cattle; and still more glad when he told me that "he could not bear me company for more than two miles farther." Strasbourg was about three leagues off. At the distance he had named he took leave of me, inviting me to accept a dram from him at a public-house on the roadside. I excused myself, observing, "That I had never been accustomed to drink so early." The excuse had at least a military probability about it, for in France I found the soldiers remarkably sober.

The day was breaking fast, and I was approaching a large town, which made it necessary to get off the highway; so I took the first path to the right, determining to leave Strasbourg on the left, as it was my intention to proceed to Switzerland, if I found any considerable obstacle in attempting to cross the Rhine. I advanced about two or three miles through the fields, then sat down, wiped my

feet, and got my shoes (with the legs of my stockings) on, though with great difficulty, as my feet were still very much swelled, and the skin had been partly peeled off. I limped on in great pain, the morning was very hazy and disagreeable, and I felt excessively weak. The heat of my feet parched the upper leather of the shoes to that degree that I was frequently obliged to stand in a pool or wet place to cool and soften them. Roving about in the open fields, in excruciating pain and under the greatest dejection of spirits, without being able to discover a hiding-place, I remained for some time undetermined how to act.

At length I heard a bell ring, and conjectured it must be in some small village. The fog was so thick that I could not see any distance. I directed my course towards the sound, and found what I had supposed. The village appeared to be a very poor one. After a great deal of hesitation I resolved to approach the next house, or cottage, to me. My pretext was, to inquire my distance from the road to Strasbourg. This I accordingly did. I found two young women spinning flax, dressed genteelly, after the German manner. They could not understand me. I made signals that I was thirsty; when one of them brought me some milk, which I swallowed with great eagerness. I offered payment, but she would not take any, and made me understand how sorry they were that they could not speak French. After this, one went out, and shortly returned with a man, who spoke a little broken French: the less, and the more broken, the better for me, for this excused me from being too explicit or communicative. I could willingly have declined her well-meant but officious services.

What were my feelings may be easily imagined, when

my civil instructor engagingly informed me that the mayor of the village was the only man amongst them who spoke my language correctly. At that moment I entertained a most uncharitable wish as to the locality in which his worship might be confined, at least until I could escape. Imagine then what my sensations were when my most officiously kind communicant politely assured me, "That the young woman had been in search of the mayor; that his worship was not at home: he was, however, expected every minute; and that immediately he returned he would do himself the pleasure of coming and conversing with me." He concluded by assuring me that the mayor delighted in paying his respects to strangers. I almost wished that Beelzebub himself had had this polite mayor in his clutches, or that his worship was thrice triply surrounded by the fairies, by the demons of Freischütz, if not by the worse imps of another place. All the visions of a good cheer, an excellent fire, repose and concealment amongst apparently some of "the best people in the world," were destroyed in a moment. I suddenly arose, and assuming a tone of great gratitude and a sense of obligations, I thanked them cordially for their hospitality, and thanked them most hypocritically for their extreme goodness in wishing to procure me the honour of a visit from the mayor; and I expressed my great regret that I could not wait to receive his worship, as I was in the greatest haste to get to Strasbourg. Saying this, I left the house.

I limped on through the fields as fast as I could, every now and then looking behind me to see if these well-intentioned people were watching which way I took; or rather, whether their officious kindness had led to a pursuit of me. The weather was, fortunately, thick and

hazy, and I advanced through the fields, carefully avoiding those in which I could perceive people at work. I had an opportunity this day of getting an excellent supply of turnips. This part of the country abounds in them; they are the principal food of their cattle; and the peasantry were busily employed in piling them in heaps, and covering them with earth, as the winter store of provender. In one respect, at least, I might have thought myself reduced very much to the condition of Nebuchadnezzar, for both my food and shelter resembled those of four-footed animals. My punishment, however, was not to be so long. "My poverty, and not my will, consented."

After a long state of suspense I descried a kind of shrubbery about a mile off, and I instantly bent my steps towards it. I found it was a thick enclosure, and well adapted for a hiding-place. Though wet to the skin, I immediately began my preparations for the night. My feet were so much worse that it was utterly impossible to get my shoes on. However, I thought I might be able to limp on by some means or other to the Rhine that night. At my usual time I hobbled forth. The night set in with incessant rain, and I found myself in a short time surrounded with marshes and rivers, and in total darkness. After wading through a multiplicity of bogs, I at length found myself in a tolerably clear country, and my feet felt better from the moisture. It was, however, useless to keep walking on, as I might increase the distance I had to go, instead of diminishing it. I therefore resolved, if I could get a convenient place, to halt until it should clear up. I espied a house at some distance and made for it, hoping to find shelter near it. It proved to be a large farmhouse. It was now about midnight. I got into the

yard, and could hear the cattle in the stables and cow-houses feeding. I could not help envying the beasts that were so comfortably provided for, but my fears deterred me from attempting to join them, and I proceeded to some distance from the dwelling, into the open fields, where I discovered a few willow-trees by a large dyke, one of which was of a tolerably good size, and its trunk afforded me shelter. It was close to a pathway, which was no small encouragement, as I expected it led my way. I sat down by the willow, and earnestly prayed that the clouds might disperse, and the stars show themselves and guide me out of the misery I was overwhelmed with. Being excessively faint, I fell into a kind of slumber; and some time had elapsed, when, on a sudden, I was startled at hearing the footsteps of a man. As information was actually indispensable, and as I might not have any other opportunity of obtaining it, I determined to accost the passenger, got up, and followed him. He walked so exceedingly fast that I had to hobble, or even run, to overtake him, though the pain occasioned by doing so was excruciating. On coming up I accosted him in French, and he answered me very civilly. He was in a peasant's garb, but I much feared that this might be merely a disguise. With some little preamble and circumlocution, I asked him my way to Strasbourg. He replied that I was on the right road, and that, as he was going there, we could accompany each other. Heaven forgive me for hypocrisy, when I assured him I should be glad of his company.

Although he spoke French tolerably well, I perceived that he had a German accent. This pleased me much, and I began to hope that by devising some very plausible tale, and by feigning to make him my confidant, he might

be so well deceived, and so much flattered, as not to betray me, even if he were a *gendarme* in disguise.

Putting on suitable looks and gestures, I began my story. I told him that as he appeared to be a friendly, honest kind of man, I wished to disclose to him what I was and where I was going, and that I earnestly begged for his advice. He listened to me with much complacency. I continued my narrative, and with as pathetic a tone as I could assume. I told him that I was an unfortunate conscript, a native of Switzerland; that I had lately received an account of the death of my parents, in consequence of which I had become possessed of a small independence, and that I had applied for permission to go and settle my affairs, and had been refused. My companion heard all this with such an appearance of honest sympathy that I came to my climax, and divulged that this cruel refusal had induced me to desert, and that I had determined never more to serve the French nation. I told him that I should feel quite secure if I could only get the other side of the Rhine; and concluded by saying that I relied upon his goodness to direct me, and that I had three crowns which were at his service, if he would only procure me a passage across the river. How fertile are necessity and danger in giving a poor mortal a faculty for invention!

The man continued to the last to listen to me attentively, every now and then stopping and surveying me earnestly. I did not much like his scrutinising looks. At last he desired me to be of good cheer, and said that my confidence in him was not by any means misplaced; there could not be much risk in crossing the Rhine, and he would direct me how to proceed and where to procure a

boat. We had passed a small village about a mile, when he halted quite short or suddenly, felt for his tobacco-box, and exclaimed, "My God, I have lost it!" He thought he recollected where he must have dropped it. I wished to know if it was of any value, otherwise it was not worth turning back for it. He answered, "Yes, my friend, it cost me twenty sols" (tenpence). I endeavoured to dissuade him from going back, but all my entreaties proved useless. The fact was, I dreaded this was only a pretext to return to the village, in order to give information and have me arrested. He advised me to remain in a place which he pointed out until he came back. I informed him I would; yet I had no intention to keep my promise. He then quitted me, and I directed my course towards the appointed spot; but when I had lost sight of him I changed my position, and, after a severe struggle, in the most excruciating agony, I got on the legs of my stockings, my old shoes, and an old pair of gaiters which I managed to button over all. I then placed myself in a tolerably good thicket, where I could see him without being seen. Here I remained in a state of uncertainty very near a hour, when, to my great satisfaction, I saw him returning by himself. I therefore regained the appointed place before he arrived, lest he might discover my suspicions. He had not found the box, and regretted very much its loss. We were now approaching the ancient and well-known city of Strasbourg, and could very plainly see its steeples, the principal one of which is acknowledged to be one of the highest and most beautiful in Europe. But, whatever admiration I may feel for works of art, I was in that condition which disqualified me for enjoying the sight of church steeples.

The stranger now began his own history, as a return for my communicative confidence. He informed me that he was a Russian by birth, had been a long time in the French army, and had deserted the service. A Russian in the French service struck me as improbable. He then dwelt greatly on the timidity of *young* deserters. He, when he first deserted, thought he should be arrested if he but saw the top of a steeple, and advised me to advance boldly to a part of the Rhine which he would point out, where there were fishermen that would instantly put me across for a mere trifle. I wished him to accompany me to the place, offering him two of the crowns which he had already refused. He would neither accompany me nor receive the money, but contented himself with assuring me that there was no danger. Close to the gates of this renowned city he told me that he must quit me. I therefore begged of him to accept one crown, which he received with great pleasure. I then shook hands with him, and proceeded in the direction he had pointed out. I have always since considered my meeting with this kind stranger as a providential interference in my favour, at a moment when I was quite at a loss to direct myself, and did not know which way to turn or what on earth to do.

I had proceeded about half a mile, when, from the number of country people I met going into the city, and from the singularity of my appearance and dress, particularly on a Sunday, I thought it most prudent to get off the highway, and as quickly as possible. I accordingly got into a garden hard by, and seated myself by a brook, in which, cold and unpleasant as it felt, I washed off the mud and dirt, and I scraped and cleaned myself in the best manner I could. I then advanced, passing through

several little villages, and crossed the river Ill in a fisherman's small boat, and for two *sols*. This extraordinary success cheered and emboldened me amazingly. I afterwards proceeded eagerly to the place that had been pointed out by my providential guide, whilst my passage of the Ill gave me a new confidence in his counsel, with respect to feeling, or at least assuming assurance and composure.

In a short time I caught a view of the broad and majestic river. My heart palpitated with joy, and at length I found myself on the banks of the Rhine.

CHAPTER X

The banks of the Rhine—Contemplations of crossing the river irregularly—Difficulties of finding a legal passage—Mistaking two armed officers for two harmless fishermen—An appeal to feelings, and a national assurance of patriotism—Cattle crossing the bridge of Kehl—An intermixture with the cattle, and a passage over the Rhine—Joy of being out of France—A progress towards Friburg—Contrast between a warm feather bed and bivouacing in the mud—An innocent landlord clever at a guess—An escape round Friburg—A night's rest—*En route* to Constance—A village inn—A countryman for a waiter, and a long gossip upon personal histories, and native places—The inconsistencies of superstition and hunger—My approach to Constance—Effects on the mind produced by its magnificent scenery, and beautiful lake—Crossing a branch of the Lake Constance—Leaving the kingdom of Wirtemberg, and entering the kingdom of Bavaria—A night's rest in a Bavarian village —*La route* to Lindau—Outmarching an enemy—The gate to Lindau—Successfully passing the sentinels—Elation of spirits —An awkward querist—Unsuccessful invention—A capture—Examination and imprisonment—Bitter reflections upon my cruel destiny.

It was on Sunday, the 22nd day of November (the eighth day since I had escaped), that all my sufferings and perils were so amply rewarded, by my reaching the margin of this majestic stream, where I arrived at about one in the afternoon, but was distressed at not being able to discover the fishermen's huts that had been described to me by my friend. My anxiety was extreme. This part of the bank

of the river was entirely covered with trees and very high grass. I had traversed the bank in various directions without success, when I at last espied a small punt hauled into a creek, without sculls or paddles, and fastened by a lock and chain to a tree. This I thought might be a resource for escape, if no better means could be found; but the thought originated in despair, for the river was excessively rapid, and interspersed with shoals and islands, and as I was not more than three or four miles above the bridge of Kehl, I might be drifted to nearly that distance were I to endeavour to cross it by myself, and thus, in all probability, fall into the hands of my enemies.

I therefore hesitated, and concealed myself in a thick covert, and rested on the grass, contemplating the course and windings of this celebrated and noble river, much perplexed as to what further steps I should take. However, I resorted to my old plan of refreshing myself by a suitable quantity of turnips; and, having found an abundance of them in the neighbourhood of the city, I was not very sparing of my vegetable diet. After a short time, I recommenced my search; and, in a little boat at a small distance, I observed two men pulling down a narrow creek. I was quite elated at this discovery, as I made sure they were fishermen; and I therefore advanced towards them without any hesitation whatever. I then called to them. On discovering me, they instantly made towards the bank on which I was standing. I need not say how happy I felt at that moment, expecting in a few minutes to be on the German side. But, my God! what was my astonishment, when, as these men approached, I discovered they were armed with muskets and sabres! It was too late to attempt a retreat; and, as I had called them, I imagined

that might, in a great measure, do away with suspicion on their part. I therefore waited the result of this rencontre.

One of them immediately jumped out of the boat, and came towards me. I appeared quite pleased; and, although I plainly saw he was going to interrogate me, I showed him a *six franc* piece, and very deliberately asked him if he would give me a passage across in his boat? He could not answer me, as he did not understand a word of French; but the man in the boat heard me, and replied, "We cannot, but we are much at your service." I perceived he was a real Frenchman; and having said thus much, he jumped out also.

"I suppose, sir," added he, "that you have a passport, and proper papers to entitle you to quit this country?" I made answer, "Certainly. But who authorised you," I asked, "to demand so impertinent a question?" "I am authorised by the mayor of Strasbourg; and, unless you can produce them, I shall be under the necessity of conducting you into his presence as a prisoner." I told him I was very willing to go with him, though it would be certainly a little inconvenient. "I have friends on the opposite side, whom I promised to visit this evening; it would have been too late if I had taken the round by the bridge; and that was my motive for wishing to get across from where I now am."

This man appeared to be a very acute sort of fellow. "I suspect," added he, "that you are a deserter from the army, and I must conduct you to Strasbourg." I showed him my dress, and the quality of the cloth I wore (though a little the worse for the late usage, it was superfine), and I asked him "when he had seen a French soldier wear anything to be compared to it?" "Ay, ay," cried he,

"French soldiers know how to disguise themselves in a superior style; so you will have the goodness to come along with us." I remonstrated on the hardship of being thus prevented from going to see my friends. He stamped, and said, "Come along!" The German, more cool and phlegmatic, appeared to mutter something to the other. I embraced this opportunity of altering my tone and plan altogether; and I addressed the Frenchman nearly in the same words I had done my late Russian guide in the morning, with respect to my opinion of his honesty, goodness of heart, etc., but differed widely in regard to my native place.

I was now come from Wirtemberg, not far from the banks of the Rhine, and had been educated at Paris, where I had relations. At an early age I had been removed to Hanover, where a friend of mine had obtained for me an ensigncy in the King of England's service. At the time the French took that place, I escaped into Prussia, where I got a lieutenancy, and had been made prisoner at the late battle of Jena. I had recently received an account of the death of my parents, who had left me a tolerably good property, and I felt anxious to revisit my native country, from which I had been so long absent. Being closely confined at Chalons (our depot), I had made my escape, and had now no obstacle to surmount but what he could easily remedy (meaning the river). I concluded, by requesting him for a moment to consider himself in my situation, and to judge of mine by an appeal to his own feelings. I saw that this reasoning began to work powerfully. I then produced the six livres I had already offered the German, and requested they would accept of them, and put me across. It was a mere trifle, but I was not in a condition to afford more. The Frenchman spoke very

feelingly; declared that it was utterly impossible for them to put me over, as they ran a risk of being arrested on the opposite side, and punished for landing anybody clandestinely. They then desired that I would hold up my hand, and declare solemnly that I had committed no crime against the state. To this I could have no objection, and promptly did so. They were satisfied, ordered me *to be off*, and advised me to conceal myself in the wood, saying, "Get over how you can; we will not molest you." I insisted upon their taking the piece of money. They embarked; and I hurried into the wood, not a little pleased at this narrow escape.

After I got secured in an excellent hiding-place, the whole scene appeared as a dream; nor could I help ejaculating to myself several times, "What a fortunate fellow! What a miraculous escape!" I remained concealed until dark, and then turned my steps towards the city, hoping that I might be more successful in finding a boat; but in this hope I was miserably disappointed. My case seemed desperate.

At daybreak on Monday, 23rd November, I discovered myself nearly at the entrance of Kehl bridge. This bridge was thronged with oxen, and their bellowing, with the cracking of whips, and the whistling, shouting, swearing, and disputing of the drovers, made a hideous noise, and created a great scene of confusion. It struck me suddenly that I might take advantage of the disorder, intermix with the cattle, and pass the bridge, eluding the vigilance of the sentinels. I was harassed, worn out, and weary of being kept in such a state of suspense, as well as of being perpetually agitated by the conflicts of hope and fear. I felt that I was too much exhausted to continue longer living

on my diet of raw vegetables, and without shelter, as the season was getting far advanced, and the weather becoming worse and worse every day. Full of these and similar reflections, I addressed myself to the all-seeing and beneficent Providence for protection, and I proceeded to seize the opportunity without delay.

I advanced briskly on the bridge; and, getting amongst the cattle, in a very few minutes I had passed the major part of them, as well as the two French sentinels that were muffled up in their sentry-boxes at the foot of the bridge. My enterprise, thanks to the oxen, succeeded astonishingly. In a quarter of an hour, to my heartfelt satisfaction, I found myself safe on the German side of the Rhine, having passed, amidst the cattle, I suppose eight or nine French and German sentinels, without being challenged or noticed by one of them. Thank God, I was now out of France. I may have been partly indebted to the weather for my escape; for the morning was extremely raw and cold, and the sentries kept so well within their boxes, that, amidst the noise, the jostling, and confusion of the cattle, they had but little opportunity of seeing me.

With a light and most thankful heart, I passed on without interruption, leaving Kehl to the left; and, suddenly turning to the right, I soon got on the high road to Friburg. The effect of this escape upon my spirits seemed to give ease and elasticity to my steps, and strength to my whole body. My entire animal frame seemed invigorated; and, as I cast my eye over the broad expanse of the noble river, and saw France, the land of my persecution, on the other side, I gave way to reflections that I may as well not repeat.

After walking as rapidly as, in my state, I could, nearly

three leagues, I stopped in a small village on the high road to refresh myself, having for nearly nine days lived entirely on raw vegetables. I was determined now to pass for a Frenchman, for I was no longer tormented with fears of French *gendarmes*. At the public-house I went into, without suspicious looks or alarming inquiries, I got readily supplied with plenty of bread and cheese, and a pint of wine, which, though of a very inferior quality, surpassed at that moment anything I had ever tasted. Danger and sufferings, excessive fatigue and hunger, would make the worst of food seem good and delicious.

After my refreshing meal, and my comfortable rest by the side of the fire, at about two o'clock I took my leave, and proceeded on my journey fearlessly, keeping the high road to Friburg. To a man who feels himself free, the very air of Heaven seems sweeter and more refreshing than to the bondsman, and I felt myself in freedom, compared at least to what I long had been.

Owing to the state of my feet, my progress was but slow. At night I began to be perplexed as to how I should act, for I dreaded that the laws of Baden and Wirtemberg, with respect to travellers, might be similar to those of France, and that every landlord or host might be required to demand the passport of his guest, and to exhibit it at the Municipality, before being allowed to supply him with a bed. After deliberating a long time, I came to the resolution to enter a small poor-looking village then before me. A place of that description appeared the best to try the experiment in. At about half-past seven, I got directed to a public-house; everything appeared to favour me, so I entered, and asked if I could be provided with a bed? The landlord answered in very

good French, in the affirmative, and added supper also if I wished. After making a hearty meal, I insisted on his taking some wine with me, and then expressed a wish to go to bed, observing that I was a little fatigued. He ordered the servant to light me to my room, nor did he trouble me with any inquiries. The servant, after giving me a nightcap, retired, and I then secured my chamber door. My feet were in a most shocking condition; not a bit of skin was on the greater part of them; it literally had stuck to the upper leathers of my shoes, and I was under the necessity of moistening them with water, before I could get them off. I then tore a couple of strips from my shirt (which by the bye was now greatly reduced), put some candle-grease on, and applied the strips to the sore places. My feet being thus dressed, although in a very imperfect manner, I took off my clothes and went to bed. I found it a very good one, though peculiar in its form, which was strange to me, it being the custom of this country to sleep between two feather-beds, the largest in general uppermost; but I had sheets and a counterpane, as in other countries.

Notwithstanding the excruciating pain of my feet, I never in my life felt so happy as at that moment. It is true that the sensations I felt in the morning after passing the bridge at Kehl were ecstatic, and of a nature that no pen can ever describe, but I really thought that my present feelings exceeded them. I found myself lying in a bed softer to me than down, with a mind tolerably at peace, and Heaven knows that to be possessed of peace of mind had lately been but very seldom my lot. I need not say, that, after humbly offering up my most sincere and grateful thanks to the Almighty God for His goodness

and protection, I fell into a most profound sleep, nor did I once open my eyes until daylight the next morning, when, though greatly refreshed, I found my legs exceedingly stiff, and my feet sore in the extreme.

It was impossible for me to walk, and a hard job even to get my shoes on. At last, I even accomplished this, though with great pain and difficulty, and I at length descended and ordered breakfast. Reflecting on the past, the idea of ordering breakfast—the very sounds of the words made me to laugh.

The landlord was obliging and civil, and I found it convenient, to a certain extent, to be communicative. I observed to him, I was very stiff in all my limbs and joints, for I had never been much accustomed to walking, and I had taken it into my head to perform my journey from *Frankfort*, this *last time*, on foot. I added that I was going to Basle in Switzerland, and wanted to get to Friburg that evening, and would therefore be much obliged to him if he could procure me a conveyance.

The man seemed to harbour no suspicions, and, having sent to inquire if I could be accommodated, he added, "I can guess what you are." I must confess I thought this was coming to rather too close quarters. The position became critical, but I was obliged to humour the moment, and I asked him to guess. To my joy and surprise he replied, "You are a cloth merchant, travelling to procure customers." I told him that I admired his penetration, and he seemed very much pleased at his cleverness in discovering, not only what I was, but why and wherefore I was travelling. I paid him my bill, which was rather moderate. He provided the cloth merchant with a kind of *voiture*, which could, he said, carry me only six leagues.

This was excellent fortune—exactly what I wished, as there was no place on the road of any consequence within that short distance. Had I been obliged to take it on to Friburg, I intended to have made an excuse, and to have stopped at some village short of that town.

We soon agreed about the price, and I got into this substitute for a carriage; the proprietor was postilion; it was an open machine made of twigs woven together, and forming a rude wicker-work. The morning was thick, with a drizzling rain. I borrowed a greatcoat from the landlord, and off we set—a great change was this in my mode of travelling! I had several turnpikes to pay, and I confess I was alarmed that the gatekeepers might ask for my passport at some of these *barrières;* but I was agreeably disappointed, my honest driver observing to them that I was, *ein Franschose, going to Basle,* which proved sufficient for them and very gratifying to me.

At about six o'clock in the evening we stopped at a very respectable-looking village; my conductor made me understand he was going to leave me there, and that I was but three leagues from Friburg. I discharged him, and went to a genteel tavern. They sent for a man who could speak French, to inform them what I wished to have. A very gentleman-like person made his appearance, and I apprehended in the beginning it might be the mayor, but my fears were without foundation. Owing to this gentleman's goodness in explaining matters, I got a private apartment and a good supper, and went to bed, very happy and comfortable at not having been asked any question. In the morning I arose betimes and ordered breakfast. The genteel interpreter evidently took me for a gentleman, for he came to ask me if, after

breakfast, I would want a carriage. I could not help smiling at the question, when I reflected on my scampering amongst the cattle over Kehl bridge only two mornings before. I merely replied that, as I had but three leagues to go, I preferred walking. What would I not have given for a carriage, or even for "a lift" on a donkey's back, or in a dog-cart, if it were strong enough, in the throbbing and aching state of my lacerated feet! But I reflected that it might not be easy, either with my finances, or with my travelling character, to pass through such a town as Friburg in a carriage; and Heaven knows that, at that moment, I would have been most happy to have compromised matters by a certainty of passing through it on foot, or of getting round it in any manner, in the style I had been accustomed to on the other side of the Rhine.

My breakfast was now ready, and when I saw coffee, toast, and eggs on the table-cloth, and thought of my cabbage-stalks and turnips and the mud of only three days ago, my head, I fancied, began to turn, and myself to suspect that what I had read in the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* might, after all, have something of truth in it. To me it had long been a novelty to have anything before me that a human being not actually starving could eat.

My gentlemanly interpreter kept me in conversation the whole time, and the part I had to play was to reveal as little—as little of truth, at least—as possible, and to receive as much information as I could, taking very good care to separate the chaff from the wheat. The dialogue sometimes kept me on the tenter-hooks of alarm.

"That is a kind of breakfast, sir, which Englishmen in general like."

This word, Englishmen, never sounded so unpleasantly in my ears. I thought the fellow was either pumping me, or that he was giving me a hint that he knew or suspected that all was not right; or that he, in fact, had discovered my false colours.

A large piece of toast in my mouth at once gratified appetite and was an excuse for not answering.

"Englishmen," continued my tormentor, "only differ from you in dipping their toast in their coffee."

I laconically replied, by an indisputable general principle, "I believe people of all nations like what is good."

The conversation, to my happiness, ended; I paid my bill, which was moderate, took leave of my German host, and of his genteel interpreter, and with a well-satisfied appetite and dry clothes, I set out for Friburg.

After all, as I went along, I very frequently repented that I had not confided to my talkative friend, "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," in order that he might either have put me in the way of procuring a passport, or at least have told me what the laws of the country really were with respect to travelling. My ignorance on the subject was most distressing, and occasioned me a great deal of unnecessary difficulty and fatigue.

About noon I discovered the high spire of the church of Friburg. It very much resembled that of Strasbourg, and although not on so grand a scale, it appeared more interesting, because I was no longer under the dangers that had made me insensible to such objects of grandeur, beauty, and veneration. I advanced towards the town, still preserving every precaution, and especially, painful as was

the effort, doing my utmost to avoid the appearance of being lame.

Notwithstanding the success and encouragement I had met with on this side of the Rhine, the recollections of all I had endured on the other made me cautious of entering, or even approaching a great town; and yet I was obliged to walk directly, and in open day, towards Friburg, since, from the miserable state of my feet, a circuitous course was to me impossible.

I reconnoitred the place in every point of view, and at last, timidly and cautiously, I approached the western gate. Being very uncertain how to proceed, I did not think it prudent to enter, and the appearance of a huge grenadier at the gate, walking up and down at his post, made me turn short on my heel, and relinquish every idea of passing that way. I walked back nearly half a mile; and fortunately discovered a path leading round by the northern side of the wall, or rather ruins, as there are few vestiges of the former wall to be seen. Advancing, I suddenly came into an old square, where a small number of recruits were exercising, and in a few minutes I was on the outside of the eastern gate. I had still a sentinel and a guard-house to pass. However, I accomplished that without experiencing any difficulty; they supposed, no doubt, that I came out of the town. I felt now peculiarly happy, since I found that another great obstacle to me was surmounted. I now took my direction for Constance, a town of Suabia, seated on the lake of the same name. The little map I had gave only the names of the larger places, which perplexed me very much; and after leaving Friburg, Constance was the next town which appeared on the line that I wished to take. I found the road very mountainous and irregular.

I met several waggons. As I got warm, my feet became more easy and supple, and I advanced apace. At about eight o'clock in the evening I discovered a mill on the roadside, and to my great joy a contiguous dwelling-house. I made out a sign also, projecting over the door—rapped, and received admittance. I made the people understand that I wanted a bed, and they bade me sit down. I thought this a good omen. I wished for something to eat very much, and they brought me a dish of boiled milk with bread broken into it, and seasoned highly with pepper. This they styled milk-soup, and it was all the house afforded.

Not having tasted anything since my English breakfast in the morning, about seven o'clock, I was not very nice. I was shown to bed, and was agreeably surprised; for it was a much better one than I had any reason to expect in such a place. In the morning I had some of the same kind of soup, and my bill, as it ought to be, was very reasonable. I was informed that Constance was nineteen leagues distant, and away I limped, although at first my feet were very sore and stiff. About six in the evening, the weather became very inclement; and, finding myself close to a small village, I purposed taking up my abode in it for the night.

I according went into a public-house, and was shown upstairs into the coffee-room: in these places the public sitting-room is generally on the first floor. There I found a number of people drinking, and a respectable-looking priest at their head. I made my *entrée à la Française*, as near as I was able, and asked, "If I could have a bed?" I could get no answer; but the landlady called aloud for her domestic, Peter, who, she said, was a Frenchman, to

explain. He at length appeared; and asked, in very good French, "What I wished to have?" I asked if I could be accommodated with a bed and something for supper?" He replied, "Certainly," and added, "I shall take care that you are well attended upon." This poor fellow was really very attentive and kind. I supped heartily on soup and *bouilli*, after which I insisted upon his giving me his history, which he did without any hesitation. It was as follows:—

"I was born, sir, in Nancy, in Lorraine, and it is now eleven years since I quitted my native place."

Here I thought fit to interrupt him, in order the better to preserve the disguise which I had assumed. I told him "that I had observed, the moment he began to speak, a vast difference between his accent and mine, and I had consequently conjectured that he had been a long time absent from Lorraine;" and I added "that the Lorraine accent was very different from that of other parts of France." This interruption was fortunate and well-timed; for the man, by way of rejoinder, said—

"I have forgotten a great deal of my mother tongue; and I can tell you that I was going to make the same remark with respect to your accent that you have made upon mine; but now you have saved me the trouble, by accounting for the difference. But, to continue my narrative, I assure you, sir, all that has befallen me has been the consequence of my having been drawn for a conscript; for it went against my nature to serve Buonaparte. I was by trade a weaver, and I knew that I could get a living in any country; and, painful as it was to part from my family and friends, I one morning took French leave, crossed the Rhine, and have been eight years with my present land-

lord. He keeps a kind of manufactory, in which I have worked until very lately; but wishing to have a trusty person in the *auberge*, he has made me drop my old trade of weaver, and attend here in my present capacity."

I now asked him if he had ever been in Normandy, which, I said, was my part of France.

He emphatically said "Never," and expressed a wish to know what trade I belonged to. Here my invention was put to the stretch; but, with as much readiness as I could command, I told him that I was a *marchand de drap*, travelling to Constance to receive orders. As a weaver, this honest fellow must have known much more of cloths than I did, and a further conversation would have exposed my ignorance; so allowing no time for another interrogatory, I added, "I am exceedingly weary, and wish to retire to bed;" and upon this he civilly conducted me to my chamber, and took his leave without another word, except the usual good-night. My bed was very comfortable, and I slept very sound, enjoying my good quarters, and reaping all the benefits of refreshment from repose. In the morning I settled with my pretended countryman, shook hands, and parted from him.

I proceeded on the high-road until two o'clock, when, greatly to my alarm, I met with an armed man in a very retired part of the road. I conjectured that he was a police-officer; but, to my surprise, he asked me no questions, and I joyfully pursued my way.

At the close of the evening I discovered at a distance what I took to be a number of houses, and I was highly elated, as I imagined them to be a village. Under this pleasing illusion I trudged on with increased spirits; but, on arriving at my object, what was my astonishment to

find that the buildings, instead of being the humble dwellings of simple villagers, were the numerous out-offices of the splendid mansion of a nobleman! One of the liveried servants, however, very civilly answered all my questions, and, with much kindness of manner, directed me to a village, but at such a distance that it was very late before I arrived at it. However, late as it was, I contrived to procure a bed and a supper. My host and hostess were, unfortunately for hungry stomachs and ravenous appetites, a little prone to the bane of life called superstition; and, as it was Friday, they absolutely refused to let me have any meat; but still the keen edge of hunger enabled me to enjoy a supper of eggs and milk, and their faith did not compel their consciences to limit me in quantity.

In the morning I quitted them, and walked towards Constance. I had not gone above a league when I descried the beautiful lake of that name. The town of Zürich was in view.[1] The high mountains of Switzerland, the summits of which were covered with snow, the variegated, beautiful plains at the bottom, interspersed with corn-fields, vine-yards, wood, and herbage, struck the eye with admiration, and afforded a prospect truly magnificent. At about five in the afternoon I was close to the town of Constance. It appeared large: a number of buildings, representing monasteries and steeples, presented themselves to view, and seemed to be memorials of its ancient splendour; but its present state indicated that it had been a long time neglected. The lake looked very beautiful, and was a little agitated, as there was rather a strong wind.

[1] Certainly not Zürich, which is over thirty miles away, with some high ground between. Perhaps O'Brien means Schaffhausen.

Lindau, at the lower end of the lake, was the next large town in my direction. I was deliberating on the best mode of acting for the night,—whether I had better take up my abode in the vicinity of the town, or proceed farther towards Lindau,—when I met with two young men, genteelly dressed. I saluted them, which they returned very politely. Both spoke French. I inquired what distance I was from Lindau. They informed me, fourteen leagues, and that I should have to cross a branch of the lake.[1] Of this latter necessity I had been totally ignorant; for the map by which I guided myself through these, to me, unknown regions was too small and imperfect to afford very accurate information. As the wind became very strong, the strangers advised me not to venture upon the passage until the next day. They little knew my motives for rapidity. Of course, I concealed my ignorance of this impediment, or rather pretended that I was aware of it; and I added, "that I had such particular business at Lindau that I must endeavour to get there that night, and should cross the passage if possible." They rather earnestly tried to dissuade me, and then politely took their leave.

My difficulties in crossing the water arose from a source very different from what they had imagined. My formidable obstacles and dangers were not the elements, but my fellow-men. I had now to learn whether I could cross this branch without a passport, and without giving—what of all things was the most inconvenient for me to give—some account of myself. However, the necessity of decision, firm and immediate, was absolute; and I entered a public-house close to the water, in order to learn what I should have to undergo.

[1] The Ueberlinger See, or northern arm of the forked Boden See.

Here, to my annoyance, was a concourse of people, some of whom appeared to be waiting for the boat. I mixed with the crowd with all the seeming carelessness and nonchalance I could assume, and called for a small measure of wine, as I saw others do; and, in fact, I settled down amongst the multifarious assemblage as if I was "quite at home." I had the eyes of Argus; and whilst I listened to every sound, I was as little communicative as possible. I felt that I was at a crisis of my fate. At last two watermen entered, and announced that the boat was ready. I was obliged to assume a courage, and to obey the summons as if it were a matter of course; and to my joy I found that although I was leaving Würtemberg and entering into the territory of Bavaria,[1] not a passenger was required to produce a passport or to give any account of himself.

When we were about to embark, I observed that all the passengers paid one half-florin each, while the boatmen demanded two florins of me. Never was a man more willing to submit to imposition and extortion than I was at that moment; but my funds were quickly ebbing to neap-tide, if not to low-water, and it struck me that my best policy was to resist anything that separated or distinguished me from the general mass.

I therefore objected to the imposition so stoutly that the boatmen resolved to detain me until they called their master, or the owner of the boat.

[1] O'Brien's political geography is all wrong here. Both Constance and his destination, Meersburg, were in Baden territory. Hence there was no frontier difficulty, or requisition for passports. He really crossed the Würtemberg and Bavarian frontiers without knowing it, during his night march between Meersburg and Lindau,

He was a very little and old hump-backed man, that might have passed for Obi among the negroes. The old hunchback, with the utmost civility that a rogue could put on when about to cheat a fellow-creature in distress, addressed me as follows :—" Monsieur, if you do not choose to pay, you may act as you please, and you can remain where you are." This was absurd logic to my ears, and very inconvenient reasoning to my pocket; but whilst I was pondering for a politic and cautious reply, the tormentor resumed his license of speech, and said, " Monsieur, you are a Frenchman; and as your friend and master, Buonaparte, robs and plunders everybody, I hold it to be all fair that I make you Frenchmen pay what I please."

I must confess that this identification of me with a Frenchman gave me an assurance that my real character was not suspected; and although my purse was nearly at low-water mark, I paid the cross-grained, old curmudgeon his four hundred per cent profit upon ferrying over a Frenchman.

Our Liliputian voyage was only about four miles, and yet, in the midst of it, I had nearly exposed or betrayed myself; for a sudden puff of wind or slight squall, coming off the land, would have upset the boat, had I not snatched the sheet (of the sail) from the hand of the clumsy fellow that managed it. This was " the ruling passion " strong in everything. The boatmen seemed astonished: they stared at each other, but said nothing. In fact, I had acted imprudently. A Frenchmen is seldom or never considered to be a sailor; and every Englishman is viewed by a foreigner as a man naturally familiar with all nautical affairs; and our boatmen, I apprehended, began to suspect that " I was no Frenchman."

We now reached the opposite shore, and entered the territory of Bavaria.[1] We were about to land at a small fortified town; and ramparts, embrasures, and bristling guns presented to my mind strong ideas of examining passports, and of even searching persons, with the inevitable result of chains, handcuffs, and a dungeon.

The sound of drums saluted my ears in all directions, and I feared it was for the shutting of the gates. Being landed, I continued with the others, passing through the street, and inquired, without causing suspicion, "What time the gates would be closed?" They replied, "In three-quarters of an hour." To my unspeakable joy, no person appeared to inspect papers. My fellow-passengers went to an inn, and I asked for the nearest way out of the town on the Lindau road. Having received the required information, I proceeded, and, to my great delight, finding the gate open, I very soon passed it.

I proceeded about two leagues without falling in with a living creature or seeing anything like a habitation. I at length saw lights, and soon arrived in a small village.[2] Necessity urged me on, and I went into a public-house and got a bed and supper. Several people were drinking in the room where I was; they laughed heartily at my Frenchified bows and scrapes, and wished me to drink with them, but which I declined. I slept tolerably well, and felt happy at having amused those fellows, at the same time that my grimaces answered my own purpose.

[1] Erroneous geography. Meersburg, the town to which the ferry from Constance ran, is still in Baden.

[2] Probably Fischbach in Würtemberg, seven miles east of Meersburg. O'Brien must have eluded the frontier guard without knowing it.

At daybreak, on Sunday, 29th November, I got some breakfast, and proceeded towards Lindau. My feet were getting better, and I advanced with great glee. After passing through several picturesque villages on the banks of the lake, at about five o'clock of the afternoon I saw the town of Lindau, and calculated that it was between four and five miles off. I halted at a small village[1] to refresh myself, as well as because I conjectured that it was too early, though it was apparently at a respectable distance, to pass by the town, more especially as it appeared large, and as it, moreover, struck me that, being Sunday, I should have to meet many people in the environs. I therefore entered a public-house, and found in it two women and a man eating their dinner, or rather supper. From the landlady, who was an old woman, I got some wine, bread, and sausages, and I contrived to amuse away, or rather to spin out, the time until it was nearly seven o'clock. I now judged it proper to proceed; and paying the old dame, I set out, full of hope, not unmixed with care and anxiety, but still little suspecting the extent of the evil that was to befall me.

I had not proceeded many hundred yards when I discovered that several soldiers were walking very fast behind me. I thought that they might be in pursuit of me. I next conjectured that if they were not in chase, they were making speed, in order not to be shut out of the town for the night. Either calculation was a sufficient motive for me to move in double-quick march. I continued at this pace for about three-quarters of a league, until, upon turning suddenly an angle on the road, I discovered that I

[1] This would be Nonnenhorn, four miles west of Lindau, on the lake-shore.

was close to the gate that led to the town. I likewise saw the town itself, at a considerable distance, on an island, and found that this was the gate of the bridge which connected that island with the mainland.

The soldiers were close in the rear; I therefore did not think it prudent to turn back; and I flattered myself that there was no necessity, as I perceived that my road led to the *left*, after passing the gate on my right hand. I thought that our course might be in opposite directions. In this hope I proceeded—passed the gate and sentinel—not a question was asked me, or a look bestowed upon me—my heart rebounded with joy—I was safe—my sufferings were rewarded, and a glorious triumph filled my imagination, even to ecstasy. Lameness was forgotton; and I was, if I may use the term, tripping along full of visions of the little I should have to undergo, of the little time that would elapse, ere I should be again upon England's element, under her glorious flag, and in the exercise of all my duties of a naval officer.

Alas! how frail are all human hopes! In this state of mind I was suddenly stopped by an elderly man, who, it appeared, had followed me from the gate. He very civilly asked in German if I had a passport. As a *ruse de guerre*, I replied in French, "That I did not understand his language." To my surprise and alarm, he readily met my reply, and, in excellent French, politely expressed his desire *to see my passport.* I wished him and his question in a worse place than limbo or the river Styx; but, as my invention had so often been put to extremities, I was not at a loss to parry his unpleasant interrogatories. I assured the old gentleman that I had lost the whole of my papers, and, I added, what was worse, almost all my money, with

several little articles of property, whilst I was crossing the lake on the preceding evening. In fact, I said that my pocket-book had dropped out of my pocket, and sank to rise no more, as the money it contained had, unfortunately, made it too heavy to float.

The old gentleman seemed so thoroughly to believe me, that I also added that I was going to Innsprück, where I had some friends, and as the journey would last only two or three days, I thought I could proceed without any interruption. At all events, I intended to make the experiment.

At this moment several soldiers advanced from the gate towards me; and as I had, to all appearances, so perfectly satisfied the old gentleman, I thought that they came only out of curiosity, or even politeness.

At last the keeper of the gate, with a kindness which I most willingly could have excused, assured me that Innsprück was farther off than I imagined; that it would be inconvenient for me to continue my journey without papers; and he reminded me that it was now getting very late.

I told him that I was accustomed to late hours, and quite indifferent to inconveniences, and that it did not suit me to delay my journey.

My jesuitical tormentor took me up on my own grounds, and replied, that to a man so accustomed to late hours, and so indifferent to inconveniences, it could be of little concern to be detained only one night, especially as the delay would be so amply compensated by the increased facilities of travelling which I would enjoy from the new papers that the commandant of Lindau would give me on the following morning. No logic could be more sound, but never did reasoning fall more unpleasantly upon a human ear.

I thanked this gate-keeper and all around me for their kind intentions, and assuring them that I preferred following my own course, I made them many polite bows, and turned my back in the act of pursuing my journey. Upon this the polite old gentleman gave me to understand, what I had long understood, that the plain English of all his politeness was, that he meant to *detain* me, although he was willing to do it as civilly as possible. Suiting the action to the word, he called a body of soldiers to enforce his politeness.

I was obliged to command my countenance, and to control all emotions, bitter as they were. With the utmost appearance of calmness, I replied, "You need no assistance, my good friend; I am ready to accompany you wherever you please, although it is putting me a little out of my way, and subjecting me to not a little inconvenience." Would to Heaven that the inconvenience had been little!

I accompanied my captor with an aching heart. I commanded my feelings sufficiently, however, to reflect that my only hope of escape rested upon my making out a plausible story for the commandant, and I spun the web of an ingenious fiction as I proceeded under my escort.

At about half-past eight we arrived at the commandant's quarters, and I was ushered into an extensive vestibule. In a few minutes the great man made his appearance. He was magnificently dressed, wore his sword, and, as I was given to understand, was on the point of going to the Opera. He seemed vexed at so vulgar a cause of detention from his amusement; and I am sure that I was equally vexed, or rather by far more vexed, at inconveniencing so august a personage.

This commandant could not speak French, and was

obliged to wait for his secretary and interpreter, who no sooner arrived than he called for pen, ink, and paper, placed himself at a table, and with a great deal of ridiculous consequence ordered me to advance and answer the questions he should put to me. He then proceeded in the following manner:—"What countryman are you, pray?" "A Frenchman." "What part of France were you born in?" "At Rouen, in Normandy." "Proceed and give an account of yourself." "My name is Louis Gallique" (the cook's name of our late frigate *Hussar*). "My father was a surgeon in Rouen, where I have got a brother (of the same profession) and two sisters. My parents have been dead some time. I got my reform, or discharge from the army, through my brother's interest. I am going to Innsprück to see some friends; thence I intend to proceed to Vienna, where I expect to be employed as a clerk in a counting-house." "How did you lose your pocket-book and papers?" "In crossing a branch of the lake, a puff of wind was near oversetting the boat; my pocket-book must have dropped out as I was leaning over. I cannot account for losing it in any other manner. It was a very great misfortune, as I lost all my money, with the exception of a few loose pieces which I kept in my pocket, and also my letters of recommendation, passport, papers, etc." "What are your German friends' names?" I gave him French names, and told him they were all of French extraction. He then began to explain the whole to the commandant; and after some minutes' consideration he informed me, "That I appeared to be a very suspicious character, and they must send me to the guard-house for the night. In the morning I should be lodged in gaol, until I could be

identified by the French Government, or, in the meantime, by my friends at Innsprück or Vienna." I exposed the cruelty of such conduct to a subject of the great Napoleon, who was their ally, and the protector of the Confederation of the Rhine. I added, they might now act as they thought proper, but I had friends who would have their conduct made known. They made no reply, and I was escorted to the guard-house. In an hour after, I was brought back and underwent a similar examination. Then they ordered me to the common gaol, where, they apprised me, I should be very indifferently treated, in consequence of their suspecting me to be a spy. I disdained so opprobrious an epithet; remonstrated with them again upon the cruelty of their conduct; but they were inflexible, and I departed the second time with the guard.

On my way to the gaol I reflected on the horrors of being thrown into prison, perhaps cast into a dungeon amongst malefactors of every denomination, and the certainty, in a few days, of being discovered. I also imagined they might treat me with more kindness if I acknowledged who I was. I therefore, after much of conflicting calculations, desired the chief of my escort to conduct me back to the commandant, which he did. I then told them frankly who and what I was, and how I had escaped. He said he thought I was an Englishman; and brought a list of the description of prisoners of war, which he had lately received from France, and pointed out my name before I mentioned it. He asked me where my comrades were. I now discovered that this description had been drawn up on our first escape from Verdun. I assured him I could not tell where they were—perhaps in

England; I had parted with them the first day. I was anxious to know what other *signalements* he had? He desired me not to be inquisitive; said I should be better used now, but must be confined in the common town prison, where, in a few minutes, I was safely deposited, and all hopes of liberty were at an end, at least for the present;[1] for so strong was the love of liberty, so energetic the desire of free action within me, that, even under this overwhelming flood of baffled efforts, of detection, exposure, and punishment, my mind would whisper to me that I might yet have another chance of escape—a chance I was resolved to take advantage of at all possible hazards.

[1] But before I quitted the commandant's presence, I took the liberty of assuring him, that even if I was sent back to France, I felt confident that, by the blessing of God, I should again effect my escape, and in which case I would write and inform him of my success. This I eventually did from Trieste. I recollect relating this anecdote to Lord Collingwood at his table on board the *Ocean*, his flag-ship, off Toulon, and at which he appeared highly pleased.

CHAPTER XI

A fresh incarceration—Stripping a prisoner naked a more effectual detainer than chains and padlocks—Hopes of escape prove delusive—Gaol surgery and gaol diet—A timely loan of books—A short visit from a Swiss captive—Orders to prepare for a return to France—A heavy chain and huge padlock—The mob at Lindau—Leave-taking between a prisoner and the gaoler and gaoler's wife—The road to France—Going to bed in chains—Strict watchings—Chances of a rescue—Anticipations of the horrors of Bitche—Commiseration of my guards—Crossing the bridge of Kehl—A surrender to the French *gendarmes*—Captivity in the military gaol of Strasbourg—A kind gaoler and as kind a wife—His gratitude for English kindness when a prisoner of war—Examined by the police—Affectionate leave-taking of the honest gaoler and his wife—On the road to Bitche, heavily chained to eleven Corsicans going to suffer military execution—The horrible dungeon of Niederbronn—A revolting night's confinement—Dreadful sufferings of two of the Corsican soldiers—Distant prospects of Bitche—Anticipations of a cruel confinement—Arrival at the fortress.

It was on a dreary Sunday night, the 29th of November (1807), that I was led into this gaol. The gaoler and his keepers placed me in a tolerably decent, well-furnished apartment, with a bed, stove, table, and chair. This was ample for the accommodation of unsophisticated man, but external conveniences are not a substitute for the cravings of hunger. I therefore pointed out to my keepers the exhausted state of my body, and begged that I might have some refreshment, however humble or however small,

This they granted; but they previously searched me—stripped me—took away the whole of my clothes, with all that my pockets contained—which consisted, however, of nothing but a knife, a razor, and a few pieces of silver. They assured me that all my *property* should be returned to me at a proper time. But I entreated them to leave me at least my pantaloons. With this they at length complied. With respect to my shirt, as the collar and ragged sleeves were all that remained, I was indifferent to the comfort of preserving it.

I expostulated with my persecutors, and begged to know the reason of such cruel treatment. They surlily replied that it was the custom of their country, and that they would take care to prevent my getting away again. "People who had a great talent for getting out of gaols ought to be treated accordingly," they said, and they added that they would prevent my escaping from their clutches. Saying this, the morose brutes swung-to the massy door, and my ears were greeted with the noise of locks, bars, bolts, and my eyes with the prospect of chains, that seemed heavy enough to secure the bodies of a regiment or an army.

In this state of nudity and solitude I began, with inexpressible grief and bitter affliction, to meditate upon my unfortunate destiny. At length a thought flashed upon my mind. Although my cell in its masonry seemed as strong as the bomb-proof casemate of a fortress, and my ears had informed me of the massive strength of the door and its ponderous securities and fastenings, yet it struck me that there might be some point of weakness of which I might avail myself to effect my escape. I even inferred, from their taking away my clothes, in order to prevent my

escape, that they were conscious that the gaol was weak in some point or other. In this pleasant delusion I waited with anxiety till daylight, that I might make all the observations in my power, and I felt determined to be off on the following night, even if I should be stark naked afterwards.

Except when these hopes and frail calculations passed my mind, I was a prey to the most cruel torments. I never slept—I merely slumbered; and in those brief slumbers I was dreadfully agitated. At one time I was seized with the idea that all my late companions were safe, and that I was the only unfortunate wretch of the party that was doomed to suffer. In another paroxysm I was tormented with the thoughts of the ease with which I could have avoided the fatal gateway, had I been aware that I was on the road that passed it. With what bitterness did I reproach myself for want of circumspection: in short, I found myself in a state of distraction. I endeavoured to tranquillise my mind with the hope of being able to get out of my present prison, or, at all events, of escaping from my guards on our march back into France; I had already got away from the most strict guards in the universe, the French *gendarmerie*. These ideas proved to be a kind of salutary balsam to my tortured bosom. But I found myself excessively cold during the night. A severe frost and snow had set in; and at this season of the year I could not expect it to be otherwise.

In the morning, at an early hour, an old lady (the gaoler's wife) presented me with a cup of coffee, which I eagerly swallowed. The poor woman felt very much for my distressed situation, and actually shed tears. I begged she would provide me with materials for writing a letter to

the commandant; her husband brought me them, and I remonstrated with the Cerberus on his cruelty in having me stripped of my clothes in a gaol (which, to my grief, I now discovered to be too secure), when he could have no idea of my being able to get away from it. I begged, at least, to have a neck-handkerchief and cap returned to me, and desired he would order the money I had been deprived of to be laid out in purchasing a coarse shirt and pair of stockings, which I very much wanted. I also requested I might be allowed one of the military surgeons to dress my feet, that were still in a very bad state. All these demands he had the kindness to grant. The secretary came and informed me that I should be detained until they received orders from the Government at Ulm,[1] which would be in about twelve days. He expressed great sorrow for my misfortunes, and retired. Great consolation was this to a poor devil without clothes!

At length the surgeon came, and humanely dressed my sores; and he expressed his astonishment at how I could have travelled with my feet in so sad a condition. When I looked at their lacerated state my astonishment was not less than his; nor was that astonishment lessened by the extreme pain that they now gave me. I was amazed at how I could have walked such an immense distance with feet so swollen and so cut to pieces.

After the surgeon had quitted me, I went to bed, and I felt a little more calm in spirit; but vain were all my efforts to close my eyes. Pain would keep me awake, and busy thought, cheerless of the past, and hopeless of the future, would crowd into my restless mind.

[1] Evidently a slip for Munich, to which the application would be forwarded. Ulm is in Würtemberg, not in Bavaria.

In this state I lay till noon, when the old lady, the goaler's wife, brought me my dinner. It was a tolerably good meal, considering the quarters I was in. She informed me that I was allowed nothing but water to drink. This I considered very inhuman, as my miserable state required something more stimulating.

In this melancholy condition I received an unexpected consolation. A Swiss gentleman was confined in an adjacent cell, and he kindly sent me a few books, amongst which was a *Life of Frederick the Great*, which interested me very much. I naturally expressed a wish to see my benefactor, but the old lady told me that there were strict orders to prevent all intercourse between prisoners. On this point she was inexorable. I was now supplied with a shirt and a pair of stockings; but the latter, though large, were totally useless to me, my feet being so sore, and swollen to such an extraordinary degree.

At seven my kind old hostess brought me supper, made my bed, and took her leave, exhorting me to patience.

Eleven days passed in the same manner, except that latterly I prevailed upon my gaoler to deprive me of my breakfast, and to give me in lieu of it a half-pint of small wine at dinner and at supper, and to allow me a candle in the evening.

The Swiss gentleman at last managed to see me. He spoke a little English, and informed me that he had been in the Austrian service, and had had the honour of serving under His Royal Highness the Duke of York at Valenciennes, Dunkirk, and other places. He was confined for debt, had been in gaol eighteen months, and did not expect to be liberated for six months longer. He appeared to be very much surprised at the Bavarians using a British

officer so cruelly; and after condoling with me a little, returned to his cell.

On the thirteenth morning, at daybreak, the gaoler appeared with breakfast and my clothes; and informed me that I was instantly to prepare for my journey back into France—that my escort would be at the door in a few minutes. He begged I would keep up my spirits. I assured him I was well pleased at the information and in being removed from so solitary a habitation. I certainly cherished the hope of escaping on the road back, not imagining that I should be treated as a criminal going to be executed. I had scarcely swallowed my breakfast when two military men were shown into my apartment; the foremost holding in his hands an immense iron chain with shackles or fetters, and a large padlock. The sight of this apparatus destroyed every hope that had before presented itself with respect to my getting off; however, I pretended to take no notice of them. This man spoke a little French, saluted me civilly, and asked, "If I were prepared?" "Yes," said I, "perfectly so." "I am sorry," resumed he, "to be under the necessity of using these machines. It is the commandant's orders; and, as you are an officer yourself, I need not observe how necessary it is to obey the orders of a superior. We are members of the volunteer corps of this town, our name is Schlatter, and we are brothers of the commandant's secretary, chosen on purpose to reconduct you into France, lest you might be ill-treated by soldiers of the line." I told him they were excessively kind, and desired them to proceed and do their duty; and added that what I suffered was no dishonour to me, for the efforts I had made had been for the sake of serving my country, and I gloried in them. The commandant's

secretary now joined the party, and expressed his satisfaction at his brothers being appointed to escort me. I pointed out to him the cruelty of putting so enormous a chain upon any human creature. He replied, "You have so often escaped, sir, even from the *gendarmerie* of France, and these are volunteers only, that the commandant thinks chaining you very necessary, and we have no small chains. There is a carriage ordered for your conveyance, and consequently the inconvenience will not be so very great."

A little more palaver followed. I talked of the dishonour and indignities inflicted upon an officer, and poured forth all the torrents of eloquence I could call to my aid; but everything was in vain, the phlegmatic German stuck to his text of the chains; and accordingly my right arm and left leg were chained together, and the ends were securely fastened by a huge and clumsy padlock proportioned to the links of the chain, and both seemed proportioned to the limbs of a Goliath or Hercules. I was now carried to the gaol door, and putting my head outside to take a gasp of fresh air, to which I had been so long a stranger, I beheld an immense concourse of people assembled, to catch a sight of the unfortunate prisoner whom the commandant had thought proper thus twice or triply to secure. The wondering crowd came to view what they thought a monster; for such reports had been spread of my miraculous escapes, and such exaggerated and fabulous accounts had been given of what I had achieved, that the ignorant populace believed that I was some demon, or at least a magician in disguise.

At last the hour of my departure arrived. I took my adieu of my gaoler, who had not exceeded his office; and then I took a most affectionate leave of the old woman,

who was crying the whole time, and parted from me as if I had been her son whom she was never to see again. I frankly own that I was deeply affected at the poor simple old creature's kindness. There are cases in which neither old age nor the gaol can harden the heart.

My guards lifted me into the carriage, and one of them sat on each side, for they seemed to think that I might yet try to escape—as if the ponderous chains and huge padlock had been silken bands fastened by some true-lover's knot. "God bless you!" cried the gaoler's kind old wife, bathed in tears. "God bless you, kind old mother!" I replied. "Drive on!" roared the guard to the postilion. Whack went the heavy whip over the shoulders of both horses, and away went our carriage, rattling over the stones. In every street through which we passed, the windows were crowded with spectators, all wishing my guards a safe return, as if they either thought that they were bound to the most remote corner of the globe, or that they were in the company of some wizard that might play them an awkward trick on the road. The guards themselves seemed little at their ease; for although I was so heavily secured, they loaded their rifles, primed them, and looked significantly at me—a hint of what I might expect if I became restive.

Although, as I have already observed, one of my guards spoke French, such was the depressed state of my spirits that I entered into little or no conversation with him. Sometimes, indeed, I asked him a question respecting his country, but it was only for the sake of dry information that I might hereafter turn to advantage. Each question was drily put and as drily answered, and thus did my journey proceed.

At midnight we halted in a walled town, the name of

which my guards concealed from me,[1] and I was so well watched that I could not ask the question, immaterial as it was, of anybody else. I, however, was civilly informed that I might go to bed here for two hours, and I as civilly or satirically replied, "That a bed was no comfort to a man encumbered with heavy chains and a ponderous padlock." If I were rational in nothing else, I was deemed rational in this; and accordingly I was unpadlocked, unchained, and unmanacled, and allowed to go to bed; but so dangerous a character was I thought, that two police officers, in addition to my two guards, were stationed in my chamber to keep watch over me whilst I slumbered or lay in bed, seating themselves one on each side of it. I need scarcely observe that I could not sleep. If an eye were closed that night, it must have been in the head of one of my guards or in that of one of their assistants.

The time elapsed, and glad was I at the coming of the cold, damp dawn. I was again chained, and we were placed in another vehicle, and I discovered they were taking a more northerly direction towards Strasbourg. We had three relays before four in the afternoon, when we arrived at Tütlingen, a small open town in Würtemberg,[2] and stopped, as usual, at the post-house, which was also a tavern. We found a number of very genteel people there. I attracted, of course, the notice of everybody; they appeared desirous and anxious to serve me, and reprobated very much the conduct of the Bavarians for using a

[1] This was probably the town of Stockach.

[2] This small town had suffered greatly by fire, and had been lately entirely new built. It is situated on the Danube, thirty-three miles N.W. of Constance.

British officer with such cruelty. I was in great hopes of staying here all night, as there was at first a difficulty in procuring a carriage. However, the Bavarians did not deem this prudent, and they got a common waggon, which was filled with straw, and placed me in the centre between them. They were not wrong in doing so, for had I remained there that night I certainly should have been rescued.

At midnight we changed our waggon at Rothweil. At dawn we again changed; and at four in the afternoon we passed through Gegenbach; and about midnight arrived at Offenburg, a fortified town in Baden, and only five or six leagues from Strasbourg. Here we went to bed, my guards having first placed their bedsteads on each side of mine.

My mind was too much occupied with the misery that awaited me to admit of sleep. The dungeons, in which I was perhaps inevitably doomed to drag out a miserable existence, appeared to my imagination with all their horrors. Bitche was the place that had been originally allotted for me, and I was of opinion, from the different accounts that I had received of this wretched place, that a prisoner's life was prolonged, only to make his punishment the greater. My depression of spirits became extreme; and even my guards greatly commiserated my distress, and frequently expressed their regret at its being their lot to deliver me again into the hands of my enemies.

In justice to these, my conductors, I must say that they used their authority with as much mercy as possible. They anticipated as well as they could all my wants; and, in fact, in every respect they made me as comfortable as possible under our relative circumstances and positions. When I reflect on these and many similar facts, and, above

all, when I reflect on the kind old wife of the gaoler of Lindau, I am bound to say that I found the Germans generally honest and kind-hearted, and the females of that country particularly so.

At eight the next morning we quitted Offenburg for Strasbourg, and at eleven we breakfasted at Kehl. This was our last stage, and here we procured our last change of horses. We crossed the bridge at one, and were most strictly searched by custom-house officers. All they found upon me was the heavy chains and the as heavy padlock. Would to heavens they had deemed those contraband goods, and had deprived me of them! These fellows, as well as the sentries, were enraged when I told them that they had not been so very particular a few mornings before, when I had passed the bridge without their deigning to speak to me. I put the latter into a most furious passion when I quizzed them upon their muffling themselves up in their warm cloaks, and keeping themselves in their sentry-boxes, whilst I was slipping by them amidst the cattle. How mad they were!—but the joke now was all against myself, for in half-an-hour I found myself securely lodged in the military gaol of Strasbourg. Thus ended all my hopes.

The keeper of this prison was, thank God, excessively civil and kind; and civility and kindness are by no means common qualities amongst the gaolers of this most civilised and polite nation. He showed me into an apartment where there was a tolerably good bed, and even asked me if I wished to have a fire. A good fire in a damp room of a gaol, on a bitterly frosty day of December, was certainly a great addition to a poor prisoner's comforts, and I frankly replied that there was nothing, under his roof at

least, that I should like so much to see as a blazing hearth; but I as honestly added that I had not one farthing to pay for it. The little money that I had possessed had been almost all spent by the Bavarians in getting me a shirt and a pair of stockings, and I saw them give the remainder, which was a mere trifle, to the French *gendarmes* when they handed me over to their custody. "In that case," replied the feeling gaoler, "you shall go to my apartment and warm yourself, and you shall want for nothing that I can help you to." This was a very different reception from what I had anticipated. It is astonishing what an effect kindness has upon the heart, and especially upon the heart of the afflicted and miserable. This man's charity quite disarmed me from any thoughts of escape. Nothing could have induced me, by any misconduct, to have brought so good a man under rebuke or punishment from the authorities above him.

Shivering with cold, I left my dark, damp room, and soon found myself in a very comfortable apartment, and my eyes were greeted with the sight of a blazing fire, whilst the crackling of the burning logs "discoursed sweet music to my ears."

My frank and charitable Samaritan soon gave me a reason why the benevolence of his nature was now poured forth so cordially towards me. He was an old soldier, and had twice been made a prisoner by the English during the last war. He had been captured up the Mediterranean, and on both occasions the English, he said, had treated him kindly; and he conceived that he was only paying off a debt of gratitude in availing himself of an opportunity to be kind to an English officer in distress. Never was logic more conclusive to my mind, or never did a debtor

and creditor account of favours received and returned sound more delightfully to my ears.

He introduced me to his wife, a German woman, who insisted on my taking a seat near the fire; and the frank, hospitable creature seemed to vie with her husband in mitigating my sufferings. After the very many hours I had been almost perishing with the cold, and cramped and numbed with my chains, I need not say how comfortable I found myself. I supped with my worthy host and hostess, and next day I breakfasted and dined at their table.

This day the lieutenant of the *gendarmerie* of the Strasbourg district, with another officer, came to interrogate me with respect to my escape, the direction I had taken, and all the other circumstances of my flight. I was frank and communicative, and they both were very much astonished at the sufferings I had endured, and expressed their wonder at my having been able to cross the bridge of Kehl without detection. They informed me, to my grief, that Bitche was the place of my destination; and that at daylight the next morning I should be escorted to that fortress, in company with eleven Corsican soldiers who had lately deserted from their regiment at Deuxponts, carrying with them their arms, accoutrements, and knapsacks. These unfortunate fellows, they added, were all to be shot. I must confess that I by no means liked to travel in such company; but my informants assured me, that although they were sensible of the indignity, and sorry for it, it was out of their power to prevent it, and that I must submit with patience to my fate. I had only to express my resignation with the best grace I could assume.

The gaoler, being well aware of what sort of dungeons I should be placed in during my journey to Bitche, told me

he had received only nine livres—about seven shillings and sixpence sterling,—which was all that had been handed over to the *gendarmes* as my property by the Bavarians; and as my funds were so very low he would demand only two shillings and sixpence for everything I had received at his table; and he gave the remainder of my money to my guard, to advance as I might have occasion for it. I felt grateful for this man's generosity and disinterestedness. His was, indeed, the most reasonable bill I ever had paid in France, and I requested he would take more, as I was certain it must be in consequence of my reduced finances that his demands were so moderate; however, he resolutely refused, so I took my leave of him and his wife,[1] and got into my place, which was by the eleventh Corsican's side, to whom I was chained and handcuffed, whilst another chain was also passed through the whole of the party, which completely linked us all together. About noon our guards were changed. The brigade that now escorted us consisted of the most cruel scoundrels I ever beheld. They placed the chain round my neck, under my handkerchief; and on my observing to them that it must certainly be their design to strangle me by putting the chain on so tight, they took in another link, d——d me for a rascally Englishman, and clapped on an immense padlock, which was dangling as an ornament under my chin the whole way; they afterwards screwed on my handcuffs until the skin was literally twisted off the wrists. They knew my name perfectly, and that I had lately escaped from my guards.

At night we arrived at Hagenau gaol, and the next

[1] This is the person I alluded to as an exception, with the kind gaoler at Arras, to all others that I met with in France.

morning at daylight went on our way. We were placed in the same order, with this exception—the chain was passed over the shoulder and under the arm, like a soldier's belt, instead of round the neck. At about five in the afternoon we arrived at an open town, Niederbronn. The cold was very intense—snowing hard all day. For our comfort, we were put into one of the most filthy dungeons that ever mortal beheld, with scarcely room to turn round, and only a small hole in the door to admit air. The Corsicans appeared to feel a great deal for my situation; and observed, "that they ought not to complain, when *a British officer was used in so horrid a manner.*" They were permitted to go out of the dungeon to get some refreshments, which the charitable inhabitants sent them; but the *sacré Anglais* was not suffered to move; and I had great difficulty to procure a morsel of food, which was handed me through the air-hole, and for which they charged double price. This air-hole was so small, and there was such an abominable smell, that I never expected to survive it. Two of these unfortunate wretches were seized with an illness, a sort of cholera, which continued the whole night, and added greatly to the *mauvaise odeur* we already had. I never passed a more dreadful night. At last the cheering moment arrived, which was announced by the usual sounds—rattling of keys, creaking of doors, bolts, etc. A *gendarme* presented himself, and, with a gruff, overbearing voice, desired us to prepare for our march. He had very little difficulty in getting this summons obeyed; but he told us we must first of all clean out our cell! "Where is the Englishman?" roared the brute; "let him do that part by himself!" I was full of disgust and indignation; and advancing boldly towards him, I resolutely

told him that I would not. The fellow was getting into a furious rage, and I doubted not but that the consequences would have been serious to me, when, fortunately, the soldiers interfered, and said that as they had caused the evil, it was but just that they should clear out the cell. This done, we proceeded on our journey, in the manner of the preceding day.

The two sick soldiers, though the poor wretches looked extremely ill, were not exempted from their chains and fetters, although the weather was excessively inclement, and the heavy snow was drifted in our faces by a fierce and hard wind. They were evidently in a high state of fever, and wherever they saw a frozen rivulet they entreated that they might be allowed to halt, to procure either ice or water; but the flinty-hearted brutes were deaf to all supplication, and the wretched sufferers were obliged to eat handfuls of snow in order to allay their raging thirst. The cruel, savage behaviour of these guards exceeded everything I had witnessed; and yet I had seen and experienced enough to make nature shudder. They also accused the poor wretches of being traitors to their countryman, Napoleon.

At about noon, on the 21st of December 1807, the high turrets and massive towers of the gloomy fortress in which I was going to be incarcerated presented themselves to my sight. Their very appearance was sufficient to strike the mind with horror; and I cannot but believe that the engineer had this object in view when he gave such outward forms to his structure. The prospect of being shut up in that detestable fortress, perhaps for the remainder of my days, could only be relieved by the probability that my length of life would be shortened by

the nature of my imprisonment. Death itself was preferable to protracted persecution, and I sometimes devoutly wished to be at rest. In this train of thought and feeling I proceeded; and so absorbed was I by my affliction, that I was almost unconscious of any objects or circumstances around me, until I was roughly awakened from my stupor and found myself in the centre of the fortress of Bitche.

CHAPTER XII

Conjectures of the prisoners as to my country and crimes—Inferences from my chains that I had committed murder—Mr. Ashworth and Mr. Tuthill, with Mr. Baker, rejoin me—Lieutenant Essel dashed to pieces in attempting to descend the ramparts of Bitche—My grief at his death—The immense height of the ramparts—My horrible dungeon—Its revolting state of filth—Interview with the commandant—An application to be allowed to take the air granted for two hours a day—Meditations upon an escape—Our efforts baffled—A Christmas night in a dungeon—Reminiscences of home and friends—A sentinel firing on his prisoners—I am removed to a cell with fifty prisoners—Again removed to a higher cell with only twelve—Improved condition—Hear of a scheme of the prisoners below to effect their escape—Contrive to join them—Stratagem to drown the noise of working-tools—Successful undermining—Noise in opening the third door—Sentinels alarmed—The guards enter—Search, and discover our engineering—Fury of the French officers—Mr. Brine, answering to the name of O'Brien, is captured instead of me—I escape from the dungeon and regain my own cell—Feign illness, and avoid suspicion.

As soon as I could collect my scattered senses and compose my distracted mind, I found that I was stared at from all sides by my unhappy countrymen, who at that moment happened to be out of their *souterrains*, on their permission to take those few gasps of fresh air that were essential to their being able to exist for the rest of the day in their noxious dungeons. I could hear some of these poor fellows questioning whether I was a

British subject. "He must have been at the head of some banditti!" said one. "He looks like it," observed another. "Perhaps," remarked a third, "he is the captain of the soldiers he is chained to." "Very likely," rejoined another. "At all events," said a fifth, "whether he is an Englishmen or a foreigner, it is clear he is not a prisoner of war, for they never would load a prisoner of war of any nation so heavily with chains." In this opinion, and in this alone, did they all agree; and I was set down by universal consent as some daring criminal that had committed one, or even a host of atrocious crimes. At length some of my old friends saw and recognised me. "Good heavens!" exclaimed one, "it is our old friend O'Brien." "But why such chains, and with such a gang?" was the reply. None dared approach to ask a question; and, as I afterwards found, the general inference was, that, in my attempt to escape, I had killed some officer or soldier who had opposed me, and that I was led here thus secured preparatory to my trial and execution for murder.

But it was not many minutes before my old friends and companions, Ashworth and Tuthill, found means to get at me.

I was never more thunderstruck in my life, for I had flattered myself that they had effected their escape, and had been happy in the thought, which had worked itself into my mind as a fact, that they had arrived safely in England. Mr. Baker, of the merchant service, and in a short time all my old companions, surrounded me, except poor Lieutenant Essel; and on my anxiously inquiring for him, to my great grief was I informed that he had been dashed to pieces in endeavouring to get over the walls, in a fresh attempt to escape. Mr. Ashworth and

Tuthill told me that they had been arrested or recaptured about two hours after they had parted from me in the wood. It had, in fact, been so suddenly surrounded by soldiers and peasantry that it was impossible to escape from it. They added that they never had been able to account for my getting clear. The other prisoners had not taken advantage of the diversion we had made in their favour, but had remained in the waggon.

The melancholy intelligence of my poor fellow-sufferer Essel's violent death was an additional pang to my misfortunes and anguish. I was anxiously asking the particulars, when the guard came up, and angrily drove my friends to their respective dungeons for daring to communicate with me. I, with the Corsicans, was most unceremoniously conducted to a different part of the fortress, called La Grosse Tête.

I shall not attempt to describe the fortress of Bitche. To give a minute detail of its strength, *souterrains*, etc., would fill a volume. At this moment it is sufficient for me to say that it is reckoned one of the strongest fortifications of France, and is built on the summit of an immensely high rock, out of which all its subterranean caves are hollowed. It has, on one side, three ramparts. The first is from 90 to 100 feet high; the second, from 40 to 50; and the third, from 25 to 30, with redoubts, entrenchments, and all contrivances of military engineering, almost innumerable.[1] As I surveyed these stupendous heights and depths, it appeared to me a physical im-

[1] In the Franco-German war of 1870-71 Bitche was still so strong, even against modern artillery, that it maintained itself long after Strasburg, Metz, and all the other eastern fortresses had fallen, and was, along with Belfort, the only place where a really lengthy and obstinate defence was made.

possibility to escape from it, and I was filled with despair. Nothing but madness could entertain a thought of attempting to escape. Being now arrived at the wretched dungeon I was to inhabit, my handcuffs and chains were taken off, and the Corsican deserters were conducted to the condemned cells. They were, I believe, soon afterwards shot. A dismal dungeon was unlocked, in which it seemed that I was doomed to be entombed alive. Solitude appeared to me dreadful, and I looked upon a "living death" as my final lot; but I found in the dungeon Mr. Worth, midshipman, and a Captain Brine of the merchant service. The latter was one of those who came from Verdun with me. They were on a door, which they had managed to unhinge, and which lay as a platform to keep them out of the excrement and wet, that were more than ankle deep: they had a little straw and a blanket. They informed me, they had been companions of the unfortunate Essel in the late attempt to get over the ramparts. Six of them had broken out of their cave, had got a rope made of sheets, and were on the point of lowering themselves down, when they were discovered and the alarm given, which made four of them clap on the rope together, though only strong enough to lower one at a time, or two at most; the rope, in consequence, broke. One was dashed to pieces, and the three others—I think their names were Nason, Potts, and Adams—so severely mangled and bruised that little hopes were at first entertained of their recovery; Worth and Brine were soon seized by the guards on the embrasure. The others were then improving fast, and they expected them in the dungeon in a few days, as soon as the surgeon had reported them well enough; after which they would have

to remain in this receptacle of filth for thirty-one days, which was the usual time of being buried alive in the first and most horrible gradation of our captivity. It was fifty deep stone steps under ground, for I have often counted them, and the most dark and intricate passages led from it to the gaoler's house, who had the watching and superintending of the prisoners, in conjunction with a guard.

I had not been more than half-an-hour in this dismal and filthy abode, when a *gendarme* came, and desired *le nouveau arrivé* to follow him. I imagined it was to liberate me (that is to say, from this dungeon), and to place me with my companions, Messrs. Ashworth and Tuthill, in one of the caves, which was deemed a kind of indulgence, they having a bed and fire allowed in the latter; but I was greatly in error.

I followed my guide through all the before-mentioned passages, and at last arrived at the gaoler's house; where I was accosted, in the following words, by a man who wore a leathern cap and frock-coat:—

"You, sir, are the person who has given us so much trouble, and been the cause of the *gendarmes* having been transported to the galleys."

"Not to my knowledge."

"You are, sir, and merit the greatest severity that can be inflicted."

This induced me to request to be informed what he meant.

"I mean, sir," revociferated he, "that you deserve the severest punishment, for not resting quietly with your guards, and for being accessory to the punishment of them."

I replied, "I was conscious that I had only done my duty in endeavouring to escape from slavery, tyranny, and oppression, and every other cruelty that could be invented."

I showed him the marks I then had on my wrists and different parts of my body, expressing very warmly at the same time my detestation of a country that could countenance such treatment.

"Pray," said he, "do you know who you are thus accosting?"

"I really do not."

"Then, sir, I would have you to know, that I am commandant over all the prisoners confined in this fort; that I have very great power invested in me, and could place you, in a moment, where you would never be seen or heard of."

I replied, "That I was not aware he was commandant —I had not the smallest doubt with regard to his power —was far from having a wish to give him the least offence —that I was entirely in his power—he could therefore act by me as he thought proper."

He listened with great attention; became quite soft and mild; was extremely sorry, but could not avoid punishing me. He accordingly ordered me to be conducted back to the dungeon I had just left. My companions procured me something to eat; and I absolutely felt happy, although in so miserable a place, at being with my own countrymen: I had nothing now to fear but the guillotine, or slavery in the galleys.

Thus, my mind being a little at ease, and my spirits somewhat recruited, I gathered together a few of the scattered straws, laid myself down on the platform that

had been contrived by my comrades in adversity, and fell fast asleep. When I awoke, the night was far advanced. My companions, by some means or other, had procured a flint, tinder-box, and candle, and we struck a light. They were anxious to have an account of my adventures, with which I indulged them, and they in return narrated to me their misfortunes and sufferings. In this manner did I pass my first night in this horrible dungeon.

There were three, and but three, livres of my money still remaining, and with this, by dint of bribery, we procured some brandy from the gaoler. This stimulus we found very necessary, for the effluvium from this noxious and pestiferous place was as strong, and almost as offensive, as that of the last dungeon at Niederbronn, in which I had been confined with the Corsican soldiers. We had recourse also to smoking tobacco, which to a great degree mitigated the effects of the fetidity of this revolting place, although it made me very sick. I now received secret intelligence, that a Madame B—l—a—d, in the little town of Bitche, had lately received, through the medium of my worthy friend, the Rev. Launcelot C. Lee, an order to supply my pecuniary wants to a certain extent; and I need not say how much this considerate and humane act of generosity and kindness had exhilarated my drooping spirits.

I could not help expressing to my comrades my astonishment at the immense strength and security of our dungeons. They surpassed anything I had ever seen, or anything I had ever formed an idea of; and it seemed to me wonderful how men could ever imagine and construct such places for the torment and slow destruction of their fellow-creatures.

It was some time the next day before we could obtain

anything whatever to recruit exhausted nature, although our cries on the gaoler's name, La Roche, had been re-echoed a thousand times from the bottom of our cell. We had taken it by turns to call out, but all of us were nearly worn out, when the fellow came to the bars of the small hole that admitted air; and after soliciting and praying, flattering and appealing, to all his good qualities (Heaven forgive us for our hypocrisy!), the rogue agreed to give us some refreshment. This he passed through the triple bars of the hole, as he was not entrusted with the keys of the door, and whatever he brought we eagerly devoured.

I inquired of my companions if they were never permitted to breathe fresh air; and, to my sorrow, they replied that as yet they had never enjoyed that indulgence. It appeared to me an impossibility to exist many days in such a place without it. I told my fellow-sufferers that I thought it would be advisable to solicit the indulgence by a joint letter to the commandant, stating our situation—at the same time requesting immediate death, if it were his intention to deprive us of health, and so cause us to linger away, and terminate a miserable existence by degrees.

This application had the desired effect, and we were allowed to breathe the air every day, between the hours of eleven and one. On this the first day, whilst respiring the air, which proved to us a relief beyond expression, I was informed by one of the *gendarmes*, that on the day after I had escaped, their commanding officer had issued strict orders to the men of his corps, who had been despatched to scour the woods and the country in search of me, that, in the event of their *finding* me, they were to scar and disfigure me with their sabres *au front et au*

visage, and to mutilate me in such a manner as would prove an example to deter, in future, any British prisoner of war from attempting to escape. This circumstance I heard frequently repeated afterwards by others of the same corps.

Upon my putting the question to them, whether, in the event of falling in with me, they would have actually put in execution those injunctions, some made an evasive reply and hesitated; while others, more candid, acknowledged that they would have been obliged to obey their orders *à la lettre*,—and that, of course, they would have been directed to state, in justification of such conduct, that they had no alternative, as I would not surrender, but resisted most desperately. No entreaty whatever could procure us any more cleanliness. We were literally worse off than pigs or dogs.

We now again began to devise and meditate upon plans for escaping. One proposed undermining the dungeon. I saw no prospect whatever of succeeding in this point. I, however, was willing to try every means to regain my liberty. Hammers and chisels with great difficulty were procured, and we carried them always about us, as the dungeon was ransacked every day in our absence. We hung an old coat up against that part of the rock which we intended to begin upon. Rope was necessary to descend the ramparts after we had got out of the dungeon; we accordingly, through some friends, who had obtained permission to come and see us, contrived to purchase some stout linen for shirts (which we really much wanted), and from the shoemakers amongst the prisoners we got, now and then, a ball of twine. We procured needles, bees'-wax, etc., by degrees, and made a

rope of four or five fathoms for each, which we *marled* with the remainder of the twine, and passed tight round our bodies underneath the shirt. Our working time commenced immediately on being locked up after breathing the fresh air. Night would not do, as it would be necessary to have candle-light, and we might have been seen through the bars by our sentinels.

The undermining business was found impracticable, and was consequently dropped. Having a rope, we flattered ourselves we might, some day whilst allowed to breathe the fresh air, be able to elude the vigilance of the sentinels and scale the walls. However, this proved to be a plan so difficult to accomplish that it was abandoned, and our only hope was that we might have an opportunity of using the rope when we should be liberated from our present dungeon and placed in another *souterrain* or apartment of the fortress.

Christmas night came, but without either Christmas cheer, etc., or cheerfulness. We were reflecting upon our miseries without anything to soothe them. The tune of "Oh, the roast beef of Old England!" would occur to us, and visionary plum-puddings and rich sirloins would torment the imagination. All the hospitality, mirth, and good-heartedness that are displayed in our native isles on this festivity were vividly before us in recollections. "*Nessun maggior dolor che ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria*," was now fully verified. Intense thought and intense feelings overcame the frame, and I at length fell into a profound sleep. In a short time I was suddenly roused by my friends and violently dragged into a corner of my cell. Upon my inquiring what this meant, I was informed that the sentinel had burnt priming through

the bars at Mr. Worth, and had snapped his musket again before I was apprised of it; if it had gone off, the ball must have passed through my body, as I was point-blank opposite the bars. The fellow had desired Mr. Worth to put his candle out, and he had refused, upon which the unfeeling wretch (perhaps intoxicated), without saying a word more, had twice snapped his piece at him—a summary method of enforcing orders. We soon placed ourselves where he could not hit us, even if his musket should go off. The candle was still burning, and this fiery though non-firing sentinel was obliged to turn suppliant, and to beg us to put it out. All the time of his supplication he kept his piece levelled at the candle. We had had an abundance of experience with reference to the character of such rascals, and carefully kept out of his way. At midnight he was relieved, and we made known his conduct to the corporal of the guard, who rebuked him severely, and gave us permission to keep our candle burning. What was the harm? We could hatch no treasons, and contrive no stratagems, by a rushlight; nor were we in danger of setting fire to a damp, vaulted, stone dungeon.

This fellow's conduct, however, had been so outrageous that we determined to report him to the commandant the next day, and we endeavoured to compose ourselves for the remainder of the night, thanking Providence that, by his musket missing fire, we had escaped his murderous intentions.

Accordingly, during the time we were out, I made what had happened known to the *maréchal de logis*, Monsieur Mitchell, who was second in command. I pointed out to him the inhumanity of this wretch, in

endeavouring to deprive poor prisoners of war of their lives, who had been placed already in the most horrible state imaginable, for having an inch of candle burning on Christmas night. He replied with a vast deal of *sang-froid*, "But his piece did not go off; none of you were hurt; and where is the use of taking any more notice of it?"

23rd January 1808.—We were, at length, conducted from the dungeon to a miserable hole under ground, to which I descended by thirty steep stone steps, where Messrs. Tuthill and Ashworth, with fifty of our countrymen, were already buried alive. Here I remained, planning and scheming everything possible to effect my escape, but in vain. I, however, wore the rope constantly round me; yet the guards were so watchful that I had very little hopes of ever being able to make the intended use of it.

This continued during the months of February, March, April, May, and June; at the expiration of which the commandant had the kindness to allow me to go up into a small room, where there were already twelve more. This indulgence, he had the courtesy to say, was in consequence of my good conduct. Messrs. Tuthill, Ashworth, and Brine were of the number. The latter wore his rope as I did, and was the only person of the party, then in the room, who knew I had one. We became daily more intimate from this confidence in each other; and after a vast number of fruitless endeavours, on the 17th of July 1808 the term of our slavery appeared to be drawing to a conclusion: I was on that day told in confidence by one of the seamen—a young Irishman, whose name I forget—that a party had thoughts of breaking out that night from the *souterrain;* that he was one of them; and he informed me

who the rest were. I began to regret having ever left the cave. However, I imagined there was a probability of getting down to them for the night. I accordingly waited upon the heads of this party during their time for breathing the air, and, without intimating my motives, I requested that they would allow me to visit them in the cave, or *souterrain*, that evening. They stared, and the oddness of the request made them suspect that I had a knowledge of their designs. Knowing their complete confidence in me, I did not hesitate to tell them the truth. With everything complimentary in their opinions of me, they still refused to comply with my request; for they assured me that they could not deviate from their fixed plan, and that was, that none of those upstairs were to be admitted below. The motive of this was a dread to excite suspicion, for it was necessary to obtain permission from the *maréchal de logis* for us to go to the lower cell, and even asking it might put the authorities on the *qui vive*. Greatly did I feel mortified at my exclusion from the enterprise. At the usual hour, six in the evening, they were made to descend, in order to be locked up, but as they went below I told them that I did not despair of joining them that evening. After their doors had been locked, I had observed that it was the habit of the *maréchal de logis* to quit the fortress for some time, and this night I anxiously watched his departure. At about half-past six I saw him go out; at seven it was our turn to be locked up. The interval was to me momentous—no time was to be lost. Never was I in a greater state of anxiety. At last I went boldly up to the *gendarme* on guard, whose name was Buché, and told him that I had been invited to celebrate the anniversary of an old friend's birth-night in

the *souterrain*, and that he would oblige me greatly by allowing me to descend. He hesitated. "Nay, my kind Monsieur Buché," I said most civilly, "what apprehensions can you possibly be under? Am I not by far more secure in the *souterrain* than in the cell upstairs?" This well-timed observation satisfied him, and I received his permission to descend.

I immediately apprised Messrs. Tuthill, Brine, and Ashworth, of my success, when they also persuaded the guard to let them join in celebrating the birth-night. I was afraid that their application would create suspicion, and prevent even my joining the party; but I was glad to find that the very reverse was the case. My celebrity for stratagems in effecting escapes was unhappily so great that any request I might make immediately conjured up a host of confused suspicions; but when poor Monsieur Buché found so many wishing to celebrate the birth-night, he concluded that there really was a birth-night to celebrate, although it might have struck a more sapient brain that it was rather an absurdity for men to celebrate anything who had scarcely sufficient food to put in their mouths.

However, it was not our business to be too curious, and I descended with my companions. As we approached the cave, my ears were struck with the din of merriment, which was artfully assumed in order to prevent the sentinels hearing the noise of chisels, saws, and other tools, that I concluded were hard at work. Some were singing or shouting, others dancing, others were making their dogs howl and bark, and by no gentle means; and the deception was so admirably kept up that the gaoler and guards might have supposed that there was a boisterous saturnalia celebrating amongst their prisoners. Before seven we

were in the midst of these "merry fellows," and our guard locked us all in together, laughing that we English could make ourselves so happy upon little or nothing. We had taken a few necessaries with us for the night, which could not be observed, in our pockets.

Our friends received us with open arms, and admired our perseverance. I found they were getting on rapidly; the miners were very active. One door was already forced. The second door was an immense iron one; it was impossible to break through it; the miners had therefore worked away the earth and rock under it. It was half-past ten before we got a hole large enough for a small man to creep through, which enabled him to force the bolts and bars at the opposite side and to open the door. This man, whose name was Daly, was afterwards a navy agent, and lived at Greenwich: he escaped from Verdun with, I believe, Dr. Clarke, and landed safely in England. The principal obstacles were now removed in every one's opinion, and there remained but two slight doors more to impede our advancing to a subterraneous passage that led out of the fort. This was a very intricate communication, and we had to feel our way to those slight doors, as it was dangerous to have candle-light.

Some unfortunate English prisoners, owing to treachery amongst themselves, had been sabred in the same passage years before, in a vain attempt to escape during the night. How valuable would a dark-lanthorn have been now! Everybody, except the few that were appointed to force the doors, were preparing for their escape. It was nearly midnight. Our over-eagerness in forcing the third door shot the bolt back, which caused a noise that was overheard by the sentinels outside. This occasioned a general

alarm to be instantly beat—all hopes were at an end. "What unfortunate wretches!" were the only words that could be heard, everybody endeavouring to get to his respective place before the guards entered. Those who were all over dirt tried to strip and hide their clothes; the confusion was great in all parts of the cave; the running against one another, mistaking each other's beds, and clothes, etc., was quite ludicrous. The visitors were, of all others, worst off: their friends, whom they came to spend the evening with, had no beds to offer them. The doors were now opening, the guards entering, and I, who was all over dirt, was rambling about without being able to find any place to creep into. By accident I stumbled over a bed, and I instantly crawled under the blankets, with my boots and all my clothes on. The guards passed close by me, even before I had settled myself; but they were too intent upon reaching the spot from whence they imagined they had heard the noise. In our cave, at this time, everything was silent. You might have heard a pin drop. Every prisoner seemed fast asleep, and one or two were even snoring. By the guard's light, as they passed, I found that I had got into the bed of a servant, an American named Clarke. He was so intolerably intoxicated (they managed that night to get some *snique*, or brandy, smuggled in) that I was a long time before I could rouse him; and when he was awake, I had as much difficulty in making him understand who I was, and why I had got into his bed. I dreaded lest the stupefied fellow might utter some ejaculation that might expose everything. Fortunately, however, as soon as he was able to understand what I said, he desired me to cover my face, and assisted me to conceal myself as well as he

could. It afterwards appeared that he had gone to bed fully aware of the part he was to play the next morning, and that he had got a little drunk to give him courage for his enterprise; and as in drunkenness a little always leads to more, he had at last got very drunk, under the delusion that he would recover himself before the time of decamping arrived. This is the common self-deception, I believe, of all incipient drunkards.

On discovering that the first door had been opened, the commanding officer of the searching party said, with a sneer, "That he would give us weeks to get through the next;" meaning the ponderous, massive iron door which I have already described. On advancing a few paces, one of the guards proclaimed, with a horrid oath, that even the iron door had been forced. This put the officer in a furious passion, and he swore outrageously against the "*sacrés coquins, les Anglais,*" uttering a tirade of oaths upon his resolution to discover the chiefs of such a horrible conspiracy. "Where are the visitors?" cried he, in a furious voice. "Where are those who, I understand, prevailed on the *gendarmes* to be admitted to the cell? They must be the authors of this horrible business, or complot."

Passion is never rational, or it would have taught this officer that those who had been admitted as visitors for only one evening could not have been the authors of a plot that must have been in active operation for many days, or weeks, or even months.

The infuriated officer called over the muster-roll of the visitors, and Tuthill, Ashworth, and O'Brien resounded from his angry lungs. I was too old a sailor to notice the first call. The first two officers were so indiscreet as to

answer. They thought that as they were stripped and in bed they could escape suspicion. But far different was the result. They were ordered to get up, put on their clothes, and, under very rough usage, they were about to be conducted to what had been my former habitation—the dungeon. Again did the enraged officer repeat my name—O'Brien. Poor Mr. Brine answered to the call; and he was, without ceremony, ordered to dress, and compelled to join the other two. Again did the name of O'Brien resound from the lips of the enraged officer; but Mr. O'Brien had no more inclination to answer to the call than he had had at first. The drunken servant had sufficiently recovered himself to understand the whole scene, and he played his part with great tact. I remained under the bed-clothes, whilst he sat up with his knees so raised as to prevent the possibility of discovering me. He protested that he was alone in bed; and appearances favouring his assertion, the guards did not trouble him, but passed on to the next bed. For my part, I saw no prospect of escaping, as the searchers were well aware of my being below, and I was frequently on the point of jumping up and joining my comrades, who were now put on march for the dungeon. The intoxicated servant shrewdly observed, "That it would be time enough to join that party when I was discovered, and that I ought to wait patiently the result." I found a good deal of reason in what he said, and remained quiet. There were three or four more ringleaders (as they called them) discovered by the clay and soil found about their garments, and the whole were escorted to the direful dungeon. The doors were then locked, sentinels being placed on those that had been broken open. I expected that the guards would return to

search for another set of ringleaders, and I remained full of anxiety waiting their arrival. In the meantime, I was of opinion that it would be as well to take my boots and clothes off. I accordingly stripped, and concealed those that were full of earth and dirt in different parts of the *souterrain*. Some time elapsed, yet no return of the guards disturbed me. I composed myself as well as I could: my bedfellow left me in full possession, and I fell into a profound sleep.

When I awoke it was daylight. The usual hour for allowing the prisoners to breathe the fresh air had arrived; but the doors were not opened as before: and they were soon informed that they would be kept locked down, until they thought proper to deliver up the names of all those who had intended to escape on the preceding night. The prisoners laughed at such a proposition, since there was nothing more certain than that all who had been capable of walking would have embraced so excellent an opportunity of regaining their liberty. On second consideration, it was agreed to give only the names of those already in the dungeon, they being certain of punishment. The commandant would not credit the assertion of so small a number of names, and the *souterrain* was kept locked. At all events, I was sure of being missed from my room, as there was no possibility of getting back to it. At eleven o'clock they generally mustered us—the *gendarme* who gave us permission to go down was in confinement, and it appeared that he had not given the correct names in the beginning, and had not been interrogated particularly afterwards, which accounted for the mistake between my name and Mr. Brine's. However, the moment which left me no hope or possibility of avoiding detection was quickly approaching.

At nine o'clock, the commandant, Monsieur Clement, and all the other officers of the garrison, descended in order to ascertain the havoc that the English prisoners had made in the engineering of the fortification.

They found, of our tools, only an old piece of a saw, one solitary hammer, and a few chisels, and they all expressed their astonishment at our having made such great progress through such massive obstructions in so short a time, and with such few and bad implements. During this investigation I had a great deal of difficulty to conceal myself; and, although I succeeded, I knew that eventually it could not be of any use, for that when eleven o'clock arrived my fate would be decided.

At about ten o'clock, a load of wood came for the prisoners. Permission was then asked to have the doors opened, that they might come up and fetch it. This was denied, and the prisoners in the rooms above were ordered to throw the wood down to those in the dungeon, through the air holes, but, fortunately for me, the billets were too large to pass through the gratings. Our guards were therefore obliged to open the *souterrain*, and allow a certain number of the prisoners to ascend, in order to fetch the wood down. A strict guard was placed at the door.

I contrived to get some clean clothes down, which were conveyed to me through the bars, and I concerted a plan with one of my fellow-prisoners that were bringing the wood down, a very respectable and well-conducted man, a serjeant of marines of H.M.S. *Magnificent*. He was to make a particular sign, by putting his hand on the back part of his head, when the guard's eyes were off the door; which he did, and at that instant I glided, or rather jumped out.

The sentinels seized me, and desired me to descend again instantly. I asked why they did not allow me to come up, since they had just now permitted me to go down? I told them that I did not belong to the *souterrain*, and that I had descended merely out of curiosity to see what the prisoners had been about the last night. I reminded those who had been in the habit of mustering the room to which I belonged, of their mistake, and asked them how they could possibly suppose that I belonged to the *souterrain?* They looked at me, appeared convinced, and seemed surprised that they could not recollect my having passed them in my descent, begged my pardon, and allowed me to pursue my way. I reached my own apartment, where, in a few seconds, I was indisposed, and snug in bed. Thus did I avoid being sent to the galleys: for, after my reiterated attempts to escape, one more detection would have consigned me to that horrible fate.

There was no danger of my being now discovered, until the *gendarme*, who granted me the permission, should be liberated. In the afternoon I obtained leave to go to the dungeon, to see my poor comrades and condole with them. They were much rejoiced at my good fortune, but feared my trick would soon be found out. Eight days passed on: I frequently paid those poor fellows a visit during the time. The *gendarme* Buché was then released, and I was obliged to keep constantly in the room when he was on duty; and, when he came to muster us, I was covered over in bed. They never called the names: to count heads was their method, which suited me admirably. Five more days had passed away in a similar manner, when we received orders to prepare for a general review, which usually takes place once a month.

4th August.—On this day we were all placed in ranks and minutely inspected. It appeared to my friends and myself that I could not avoid discovery on this occasion, as all the *gendarmes* attended. There was no exception or excuse of sickness to be made; if a prisoner was able to crawl he must attend, and frequently they were carried. I took my station in the ranks, expecting in a few minutes to be lodged with my old companions in limbo.

The *gendarme*, whom I had so long avoided, riveted his eyes upon me. I had received information that he was going to make known to the commandant Clement, or to General Maisonneuve, that I had importuned him more than the rest, and was the person who prevailed on him to let any down. He was astonished at seeing me, having been informed that I was in the dungeon with the others. Shortly afterwards he passed me, and I saw him go and speak to both the above-mentioned officers: I was then confident he had completed the business. The review took place; every one was inspected, and some were asked several questions. I was passed over with very little notice. I could not account for it, yet was of opinion that they would have said something on the subject had they been made acquainted with it. Glad was I when we were all dismissed and the officers allowed to retire. My escape was to me unaccountable, but not on that score the less welcome; I was, however, so confounded at my good fortune that I had forebodings that some latent mischief was held in reserve.

Whilst I was pacing to and fro, in an awkward dilemma, the *gendarme* Buché approached and accosted me in these words:—

"By what miracle have you escaped from the dungeon?

How, in the name of all wonders, have you got up from the *souterrain?* I have seen you walking about some days, although perhaps you did not see me."

There was no mistaking his meaning, but, full of apprehensions as I was, I resolved to put on a face of wonder at his thus presuming to address me, and to persevere in an assertion of my ignorance of all he alluded to.

"Pray, sir," I replied, "and why should I be put in the dungeon?"

"My God!" he exclaimed, astonished at my effrontery, "were you not the very person that was chiefly the occasion of my letting you and your three companions down to visit your friends, and to celebrate the anniversary of a birthday, as you called it?"

"You must certainly, sir, have made a mistake; it was not me," I rejoined with an air of offended innocence.

The man was not to be browbeaten or imposed upon in this way. He stuck to his text, and insisted that I was the culprit; but, to my great relief, he added that he had no desire to see me punished, for, as his punishment was over, mine could afford him no alleviation. I was glad to find one human being so devoid of the spirit of revenge; and yet the fellow added that he would have told the general and commandant of me, had not his wife persuaded him—*Anglicè*, ordered and compelled him—not to do it. Perhaps the lady might have had some peccadilloes on the part of her husband to resent, and was not over-grieved at the punishment into which I had betrayed him.

I still preserved my dignified composure, and assured him that he should lose nothing by his indulgence, and for what he had suffered in consequence of it, for I knew

the generosity of the *gentleman* on whose account he had been put into confinement.

At this he could retain his countenance no longer, and he burst out into a horse-laugh in my face. I was obliged to throw off the mask. He shook me by the hand, and we became such good friends that he even took me to the dungeon that afternoon, to see my unfortunate companions. Nothing could astonish them more than my appearing with this man, whom they imagined it morally impossible to appease, as his indulgence to me had led to his disgrace and punishment. I gave them an account of all that had happened, and of the dialogue that had that day taken place between him and me, upon which they all congratulated me, and styled me the most fortunate prisoner of the fortress.

CHAPTER XIII

A trial at Metz—English officers sentenced to the galleys—Forging and using false passports—The consequences—A new scheme of escape—A favourable night but unfavourable sentinels—A farewell dinner—Another attempt at escape—A descent of ramparts by a rope—Concealment in a ditch—Rolling down a glacis—An adieu to the Mansion of Tears—Making towards the Rhine—Concealment in a wood—Refuge in a vineyard—Shooting a fox—Disturbed in our lair—A flight and its dangers—The banks of the Rhine—Passing the river—A joyful escape into neutral territory—Prospective comforts of an inn, and refreshment.

It was the next day (5th August, 1808) that my unfortunate companions received orders to prepare for a march to Metz, to which place they were sent under a strong escort, in order to take their trial as conspirators. How the simple attempt of prisoners of war at gaol-breaking could come under such a class of crime was to me inexplicable. Buché, the *gendarme*, was ordered to repair to Metz, to act in the double capacity of prosecutor and chief witness. I was now entirely in this man's power. A single word from him would have included me in the number of the proscribed and condemned; for to be tried and condemned before such a tribunal were tantamount to the same thing. Fortunate did I consider myself that Buché did not denounce me.

I had the mortification to see my poor companions heavily ironed and bound in chains. After being closely

confined in their filthy and pestiferous den for many days, they were to be marched twenty-five leagues, in order to be put upon their fictitious trials. We parted as affectionately as possible, and I could almost voluntarily have shared their fate,—"Our crime was common," in the words of the poet, and I could not help repeating the end of the line, "and common be the pain."

In a few days I received a letter from my friend Mr. Ashworth, giving me a melancholy narration of the trial; and he concluded by stating that himself, and several of our friends, were sentenced "*as slaves to the galleys for fifteen years. Mr. Tuthill was sentenced to only nine.*[1]"

I was so shocked with this part of the intelligence that I dropped the letter, and proceeded no further, and I hurried to relate the afflicting news to my brother-prisoners. The feelings of indignation it excited were extreme, and though under the absolute power of the enemy, we loudly exclaimed against the barbarity and tyranny of a nation that called itself civilised, and could suffer such a judicial sentence to be passed or executed.

After the first ebullitions of rage and indignation had subsided, one of my friends picked up the letter, and the whole scene was quickly changed; for, on reading further, he found that the sentence of the court had been reversed. Great as was this consolation, it did not alter my feelings towards the chief of the French nation.

The letter went on to inform me that two of our seamen were condemned to the galleys for six years, and

[1] For a full text of the proceedings of this court-martial, the reader may consult Mr. Ashworth's account of his adventures, published in Nos. 28, 31, 33 of the *Naval Chronicle*.

that they had actually been sent off to their destination. This I thought was horrible.

I knew both of these unhappy victims. One was an Italian by birth, and the other an Englishman. The former, John Gardner, *alias* Italian John, I found had been condemned for making out a false passport for the other, one Henry Hudsell, *alias* Quiz. Hudsell escaped from Bitche, and travelled several leagues with this fictitious passport, before the imposition was discovered. If the reader will only consider the treatment which our prisoners had endured, with no prospect of having an exchange during the war, and that although this said crime may be termed forgery, it was not done to molest or injure any person whatever, but was simply planned to liberate the bearer, I have not the smallest doubt but that he will agree with me in opinion, that it falls very short of deserving a punishment equal to six years, with all denominations of malefactors, in the galleys.

There was an Englishman lately arrived from the galleys, who had served in our army on the Continent, under His Royal Highness the Duke of York; his name, to the best of my recollection, was Barnes. He stated that he, with some others, had been made prisoners by the French, and, by some accident, one of their guards was killed. The whole of the prisoners were accused, and sentenced to twelve or thirteen years' slavery—I am not confident which; however, he was the only survivor. His time being up, they conducted him to the depot of punishment, still to be considered as a prisoner of war. It surely behoved our government, at the peace of 1814, to direct strict inquiry to be made whether any of our countrymen were still suffering in the galleys!

September, 1808.—I had by this time another plan of escaping in contemplation, and with every hope of success. The arrival of a Mr. Hewson and a Mr. Butterfield, midshipmen (who, in March last, had escaped from Verdun, and had got down to the Gulf of Lyons, in the Mediterranean, where they had been arrested and brought back to Bitche), favoured my plan very much. Mr. Hewson being an intimate friend and very old acquaintance, I communicated to him my plan, and he rejoiced exceedingly at an opportunity so soon offering for another attempt to be off. However, it was necessary to wait some time, as he was placed in the *souterrain*. In a few days he contrived, owing to real indisposition, to be moved upstairs into a room appointed for the sick. I now only waited for the worthy Hewson; it was necessary to endeavour to get him up into my room—no other prospect was left. He made application by letter to the commandant; and on the 11th of September succeeded. We wanted nothing now but a favourable moment. The next day, Mr. Barklimore, a mutual friend of ours, also received permission to reside in our apartment. This gentleman is at present a surgeon of reputation in Charlotte Street, Bloomsbury. We were, fortunately, only seven in number, in consequence of the other poor fellows being at Metz; and of these seven, three were confined to their beds. The fourth was a Mr. Batley, a dragoon officer of the East India Company's service, who had been captured in the *Bell* packet, bound to India. He had been a long time in the room, and informed me that he had conjectured what we were about, and requested to be allowed to join and partake of our danger, which we agreed to. No opportunity of getting past the

sentinels yet presented itself. Our friends arrived from Metz, but were put below. I communicated the business to them: they thought it a very dangerous and hazardous plan; however, they would have willingly run the same risk with us, if they could: but that was impossible. On the 12th of September, and the very evening before our meditated attempt to escape from the fortress, the commandant, M. Clement, in passing through the yard in which we were allowed to respire the air, very condescendingly stopped a few minutes to converse with me; when he addressed me by saying, "Well, Monsieur O'Brien, I think now that the Emperor of Austria has joined us, you must relinquish all hopes of escaping, for there is no chance whatever for an Englishman to get off from the Continent." I replied, "That is very true, Monsieur le Commandant; but if that had not been the case, Monsieur le Commandant, where is the possibility of getting out of this strong fortress, and so well guarded too?" "True," said he, smiling; "but the attempt has been made more than once, though it has invariably proved unsuccessful, and frequently fatal to some of the party." He continued by saying, "My opinion is, that if prisoners of war, I mean English, could manage to get out of confinement, their only course would be that towards Flushing or Rotterdam, where they are always pretty certain of finding English smugglers ready to embark them." I assured Monsieur le Commandant that his remarks were quite correct, and that if I thought there was the slightest chance of escaping from the fort, I would not hesitate to try and do so to-morrow, or as soon as possible. "I believe you truly, Monsieur O'Brien, and I give you credit for your candour," was his reply; "had you spoken other-

wise, I would not have believed you": and he added with a smile, as he bade me adieu, "you may try and get away if you can, and we shall take care and do all in our power to prevent you." I could not help thinking this conversation at so critical a moment very extraordinary. However, this opinion of his did not make us alter our intended course for Austria.

It was now the 13th of September, and the third day since my friend Hewson had joined us. The night was very boisterous and inclement, and this we thought proved much in our favour. Everything was got ready. Our rope was tightly wound into a ball and concealed in a pocket-handkerchief. Every moment was anxiously watched and counted. At length darkness set in. It rained in torrents, blew almost a hurricane, the thunder rolled with a tremendous sound, and I scarcely ever witnessed in any part of the globe a more desperate night. All this was so far, we considered, propitious; but, unfortunately, the flashes of lightning were vivid and incessant, and this was a serious source of danger.

We now unlocked our door, and remained at the bottom of the flight of stairs, waiting to see the sentinels go into their boxes. This was about eight o'clock, and four hours did we watch, until midnight, and not a single soul of them left his post. This was the more provoking, for as it poured a deluge of rain, and they were without their greatcoats, we had calculated with certainty upon their requiring and seeking shelter. The reverse was the case, and during the whole time they were as vigilant as if they had suspected our designs.

We at last agreed to return to our apartments until the ensuing night, and to deposit all our apparatus in

places we had previously fixed upon for concealment; but, upon second thoughts, we considered that, in all probability, the sentinels that came to relieve the watch at midnight would not be so very hardy or watchful as their predecessors, and that we might yet have an opportunity of putting our scheme into execution. In this expectation or hope we waited, in a state of intense anxiety, until two in the morning; but, to our discomfiture, we found that the sentinels defied the elements, and kept their posts in the strictest sense of duty. Chagrined and vexed, we returned to our apartments, locked the door and went to bed.

The *souterrain* was opened at the usual hour, and our friends came running up, imagining, from the inclemency of the night, that we must have succeeded in effecting our escape; and greatly were they disappointed at finding us all snug in our beds. I related all the circumstances to them: they shrugged up their shoulders, and expressed their fears that, if we could not get off in such a night as the last, there was little hope of our escaping in fair weather.

On the 14th of September we dined early, that we might have the pleasure of our friends' company to a farewell dinner during the time allowed them for breathing the fresh air. We were determined to lay in a good foundation for our journey, and got a very large piece of beef, had it roasted, and procured plenty of bread, beer, and vegetables. This, for our circumstances, was more than an alderman's feast: we all enjoyed it, earnestly hoping that it might be the last that we should ever eat within the walls of a French prison. Our friends pointed out to us the number of difficulties we should have to sur-

mount in passing the guards—the danger that would attend it—and expressed the anxiety they were under for us. We, however, were determined not to relinquish our undertaking, and to be ready every night until an opportunity offered. We parted as we had done the night before. They did not suppose we should have any chance that night, as the weather was moderate and fair. At our usual hour of six (the winter regulations having commenced) we were locked up, and immediately recommenced our preparations. We thought, perhaps, the sentinels might be more careless early in the evening; that is to say, before eight, which was the usual time to set the night-watch and give the necessary orders.

We were now again all ready. Our door was opened; and we could see the sentinel, whom we had most to fear, walk up and down before our windows. His box was in front of the door, in the yard through which we had to go; but, as our guards lived underneath our apartments, we thought he would take anybody moving about so early for one of them: and it was unusual to challenge any one before eight o'clock.

At about seven, the soldier, to our infinite joy, entered his box. I instantly descended the stairs that led into the yard. It was just dusk; and I was to take six minutes on the forlorn hope, as it might justly be termed, to fix our rope to a palisade, and to descend the first rampart, before Mr. Hewson followed, who was next on the list. I passed the sentinel quite close, and could see him leaning over his musket. He never moved, though I met his eye, probably taking me for one of the guards; and I arrived, providentially, at the spot fixed upon to make fast the rope, which I very soon accomplished, and was just in the

act of descending when my friend Hewson arrived. In a few minutes, to my inexpressible satisfaction, we were all four at the bottom of the first wall. Our principal object being now accomplished, we congratulated each other. We had two walls yet to descend; the heights, as I have already mentioned, being respectively from 90 to 100, from 40 to 50, and the third from 25 to 30 feet. We all clapped on to the rope, and crawled up with our feet against the wall, until we got a good height. We then swung off together, when the rope broke, and we fell upon one another, leaving in our hands enough to enable us to descend the next rampart. We made this piece fast to one of the upper stones of the embrasure, and again descended. We had now to repeat our haul upon the rope, and it again broke, leaving a piece of sufficient length for our future purpose, the descent of the third and last rampart.

We had taken the precaution of providing two long boot-hooks to stick in the wall, to make our rope fast to, in case we should find no other means of securing it. These proved of the greatest use in getting down the third rampart. In fact, had we not had them with us, we must have surrendered ourselves, for not one single means could we find of fastening the rope to anything, and to drop from a height of 30 feet might have been destruction. The boot-hooks served our purpose: we were at the bottom of the third wall; and all that we had now to do was to pass the outer sentinels, who were few in number, and rather slack in vigilance, perhaps from the supposed impossibility of any prisoner effecting an escape in this direction. We had, in fact, let ourselves down by this frail rope a total height of from about 180 to 200 feet.

At the bottom of the third rampart we remained in the *fosse* or ditch; and we had to watch the turn of the sentinel that was pacing immediately before us. As soon as his back was fairly turned, we ascended the scarp of the ditch, and gently rolled ourselves down the slope or glacis. In a few minutes, with our hearts rebounding with joyous emotions, we were on the road to Strasbourg, on which we continued running as fast as we possibly could for nearly an hour. We then halted to put on our shoes, which we had hung round our necks as we rolled down the glacis, as we had found it more secure to descend the walls without shoes than with them, the feet being much more pliable.

We now turned round to take, as we hoped, a final view of the Mansion of Tears, the name that had been so long given to this detestable fortress by the unfortunate prisoners, many of whom had shed an abundance, or showers of them, within its horrid cells and dungeons. We spontaneously returned our thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance, and shook each other cordially by the hand, overwhelmed with exultation at our almost miraculous success. When we looked at the stupendous heights of the rock and fortress, it seemed as if a miracle alone could have enabled us to descend them, suspended by so slight and ill-made a cord as that which we had been able to construct out of our shirt-linen and a little cobbler's twine.

The adventures of the last hour flitted across my mind like a dream or fairy tale. I could scarcely believe my senses when they told me that I was once more free and my own master. I frequently stared at my companions, and said to myself, "My God! is it then possible that we

are once more clear of our tyrants, and delivered from slavery and persecution?" I now addressed them, and observed how much it behoved us to proceed cautiously. It was Messrs. Hewson's and Barklimore's second attempt, Mr. Batley's first, but my third, the *souterrain* affair not included. I consequently had most reason to be on my guard; and of course became the leader. I therefore candidly observed that I should run no risks that could by any means be avoided, and that the moment they should attempt anything that I deemed rash or imprudent I would quit them. They expressed the utmost satisfaction at my resolutions, and ardently desired to conform to them.

We unanimously directed our course (by the stars) due east, which would take us directly to the Rhine, and a considerable distance to the northward of Strasbourg; and at daybreak, on the 15th, we entered an excellent wood on a mountain's side, close to the high-road, got well up into it, and had a full view the whole day of those who passed underneath, without a possibility of being seen by them. We saw some of the *gendarmes* from our late mansion in full gallop towards the Rhine, and were certain they were in pursuit of us, and intended to give a description of us, as they advanced, to their brethren who were quartered in the adjacent villages.

Barklimore, to our mortification, began already to feel strong symptoms of a relapse of fever. However unfortunate this was, we were determined not to quit either him or Batley until we had piloted them across the Rhine. At about eight at night we descended from our lurking-place, and proceeded cautiously in the above-mentioned direction. A little before daylight (the 16th)

we halted. Mr. Batley's feet were exceedingly sore and painful, and having a secure hiding-place, we thought it most prudent not to advance farther until the next night. Our refreshment was a little ammunition bread and sausage, with what other things (such as cabbages, turnips, etc.) we procured in the fields. When it became dark we recommenced our journey; but our two companions became weak and exhausted, and our progress was therefore very slow. On the 17th we halted, and remained in a wood, as we had done the two days before, and at nightfall we again pushed on, expecting in a few hours to reach the much-longed-for banks of the Rhine.

However, daylight on the 18th brought no appearance of the river; and, what was of more consequence, there was no wood in view in which we could screen ourselves. We advanced about a mile, when we discovered a vineyard, into which we hastened with all possible speed. We were apprehensive of being seen by the watchman or guard, who is always on the look-out, and we consequently kept creeping forward, until we calculated that we had reached at least the centre. The ground was very wet and uncomfortable, and the rain kept dripping, or rather pouring, upon us from the leaves; but we were not in a condition to be fastidious, and were highly pleased at being so secure and well placed.

About an hour had elapsed, when we heard a man whistle at a short distance. It struck us that this must be the guard, and if he saw us, we were certain that he would suspect that we came at least to pick the grapes, as they were almost ripe; which is a penal offence in this country. Not many seconds afterwards we heard the report of a musket, and the small shot rattled through the

vines close to our heads. We inferred that the fellow had taken this summary mode of arresting us; but in a moment a huge fox, with dogs in chase, passed close by, with the man shouting at a small distance behind, who, fortunately, did not follow the dogs in a direct line, or he would have come right upon us. How to act we could not devise. To quit the vineyard would have been extremely dangerous, and after a short debate we thought it most prudent to remain where we were. At about ten we were again greatly alarmed by the sound of voices that were approaching us rapidly. We lay close down on our faces, with no hopes of escaping from being seen, the voices still drawing nearer. In a short time we found they were at a stand, but close to us. I lifted up my head to peep through the vines, and saw the legs and thighs of two men close to me, the skirts of their greatcoats almost touching where we were; but their backs were turned, and they were moving on in an opposite direction: in a few minutes we lost sight of them altogether. I proposed to move to some other place, as we had been in constant alarm since we chose the spot where we then were; and I was of opinion that it was near a pathway, We accordingly crept along to another spot, but had been scarcely an hour there when we again heard a rustling amongst the vines. Each of us, much disconcerted, lifted up his head, and looked towards the place whence we heard the noise; we observed a woman with an infant in her arms, leading a little girl about seven years old, and coming directly upon us. The woman could not see us at first, but the child did, her little head being considerably under the branches. She immediately screamed, and seized the woman by the hands; upon which I stood up, and accosted her in German.

She was dressed in the country garb, appeared much confused, and made no reply, but proceeded onwards, and we agreed to quit the vineyard before she could get to the village to give an account of this occurrence. In a few minutes we were upon the high-road. At that moment there were only two women on it, and they seemed to be coming towards us. We advanced very deliberately. I had studied German a little in Bitche, and found it now of material service, it being the language spoken in Alsace. I asked them what distance we were from the Rhine. "*Three hours*," they replied. We parted, and continued our route, eagerly wishing to find some place of concealment.

After a very short time we discerned a man advancing towards us. To our great annoyance, he stopped and surveyed us over and over again with apparent astonishment. We ought not to have been surprised at this, for, in spite of every effort to avoid it, we were covered with mud, and must have presented a woeful, or at least a very singular spectacle. Batley was hardly able to crawl along, on account of his feet. We continued our route, and we observed the man turn again and again to look at us; and, without actually making out what we were, we had no doubt that he took us for "no better than we should be."

We now discovered a shrubbery, where we were soon snug and well concealed. It was one of the best hiding-places I was ever in, although it was close to the road. It was now about four o'clock, and we were not far from the Rhine. Under these favourable circumstances we hoped to be able to cross it that night at least. Our conversation now turned upon the difficulty of getting a boat, and the danger of approaching a house on the French

side. Our provisions were nearly exhausted. However, we were sanguine of success, and anxiously wished for night, that we might make our experiment.

The anxious hour arrived, and we set forward with great spirit—not, however, forgetting to observe every necessary precaution. As this part of the Rhine was infested with smugglers, it was natural to conclude that there must also be a great number of custom-house officers, and we were obliged to be most vigilant and circumspect —need I say that the Étaples affair was vivid in my memory?

About eleven we made the circuit of a large town,[1] and at midnight, to our unspeakable joy, we descried the long-wished-for river, with it broad expanse shining like a mirror, and reflecting the heavens in a mirror-like way. We were soon on its banks. We rested for a few minutes, to take breath and to make our observations. There was an excellent wood hard by, and we resolved to retreat into it for concealment, in case we should not be able to get a boat that night; and, in the meantime, we agreed to proceed for about an hour in a northerly direction: which course we commenced, prying into every little creek and nook of the river. The morning being starlight, beautiful, and serene, we could hear the cocks crowing and dogs barking on the German side. This splendid river flowed before us, about a mile in breadth, with not an island to impede the view, which is not the case on all parts of the Rhine. My God! how we longed to be conveyed across! This anxiety prevented our fully enjoying the delightful prospect before us: it appeared to be a terrestrial paradise. We continued nearly an hour admiring and advancing,

[1] Apparently Lauterburg.

when the Great Ruler of all human affairs, whose Providence had so much favoured us throughout this attempt to escape, gave to our view a boat made fast with a chain to a stake driven into the bank, close to a heap of wood, which I supposed she was to have been loaded with at daylight. We were all struck with the secret impulse which had directed us to this very spot; and from that moment I felt an inward support and conviction that I should now succeed. On examining further, we found the chain of it locked. The doctor and myself got hold of the stake, and with little difficulty drew it out of the bank. This security of a chain and lock upon a movable stake made me observe that it was like "the lock upon leather which made the Irishman's knife laugh." Three of our party being from the Green Isle, the remark caused a general burst of merriment. Mr. Hewson, an expert sailor, and myself, soon constructed a pair of oars, or paddles, out of a couple of pieces of the wood. We then embarked our two comrades, whom we placed at the bottom of our little boat; and in about twenty minutes we were safely landed on the opposite side, having drifted nearly a mile and a half with the rapidity of the flood. We drove the stake in the ground, that the owners of the boat might find her at daylight, and proceeded into the country as fast as possible. We would have left money for the owner of the boat for the trouble we had caused him, though we were most woefully provided with that necessary of life; but it was obvious that there could be no certainty, and even little probability, of its falling into the right hands.

At daybreak of the 19th it became excessively thick and foggy: poor Batley was almost knocked up, the doctor was very much fatigued, and ourselves rather weary. We

discovered a village on the river Merg, and after surveying it strictly, we agreed to enter it and to go to the first public-house we should see, for the purpose of obtaining refreshments and putting ourselves into as decent order as we could, not only for the sake of comfort, but in order to prevent our appearing as objects of suspicion. I calculated that we might very well pass ourselves off as Frenchmen; and from the knowledge I had of the German small villages, I was not in the least apprehensive of danger. This was the sixth day, including Wednesday, that we had passed without rest, and five of them under the open canopy of heaven, exposed to the elements, without having even once approached the dwelling of any human being. They who are clothed in purple, and fare sumptuously every day, can form no idea of what man endures, unfed, uncomforted, unhoused, and even unkennelled.

CHAPTER XIV

Refreshments at a village inn—The town of Rastadt—A civil traveller—Good accommodation—Baden—Awkward rencontre with a royal party—An alarm about passports—A genteel inn dangerous to fugitive travellers—The advantages of a drunken landlord—The town of Hornberg—To Kriemhieldsach, after passing the Black Forest—Banditti—The murder of a French general—A German inn and a rustic dance—The town of Tütlingen—A concealment of eight days—Vain attempts to smuggle passports—Progress of our journey—Crossing the Iller—Leaving Würtemberg and entering Bavaria—The progress of our flight—Kaufbeuern—An inquisitive landlord and frightened guests.

"Come what come may," we were out of hated France, and our pulses beat with joy that the glorious river intervened between us and the land of our bondage and sufferings. "Flow on, thou shining river," I repeated from the song of Erin's modern poet, "flow on; for neither French *gendarmes*, French spies, nor French laws can reach us across thy broad and noble expanse of flowing waters. Here French chains cannot corrode the body, nor can French despotism and tyranny prostrate the spirit, and eat, like the canker-worm, into the heart." Such were our reflections as we left the banks of this river of salvation and proceeded to the neighbouring village.

It was about seven in the morning that we entered into a tavern—if so it could be called. A servant-maid and child were the only people up. We gave ourselves out as

French travellers from Prussia going into France, and who wanted their breakfast.

The landlady was forthwith roused; breakfast was prepared; a barber, who was also a surgeon, was sent for, and we got shaved, had our clothes brushed, and again made ourselves look "somewhat like gentlemen." We found the house very well calculated for our purpose, and this barber and surgeon proved to be an intelligent sort of a man. Rastadt, he told us, was but three leagues off; and from different questions we put to him, we found that we must have crossed the Rhine close to Durlach. Rastadt was on the river Merg, and about four miles north from Baden, the capital of the margravate.

We quitted our village inn at about nine, having well satisfied our landlady for our excellent breakfast and timely accommodation. We had fed like cormorants upon coffee, and delicious bread and butter, and felt all the refreshments of shorn beards, washed skins and tolerably well-brushed clothes.

We now directed our course towards Rastadt. Batley was very lame. Everybody that passed took notice of him, and it became too evident that it was impossible for him to continue the journey many hours longer. As I have before observed, we had intended to leave him and the doctor the moment we had got across the river into Germany; but we now agreed not to quit our other friend. The great and difficult point was, where to place the invalid, so as to secure his safety until he should recover the use of his limbs. He regretted not having remained where we had breakfasted.

Rastadt then appeared to us an open town. We thought it too dangerous, however, to pass through it;

we therefore made a *détour*, and struck off the road to a small village about two leagues distant, where we went into a public-house. They could not speak French, nor could we sufficiently explain in their language what we wanted respecting our sick friend. An old man was sent for as interpreter, who happened to be a shoemaker. We began by ordering a pair of shoes for Batley; and then observed that we were Frenchmen from Prussia, going to Strasbourg; that our comrade, Batley, was knocked up, and we wished it explained to the people that we meant to leave him with them a few days until he had gathered strength. We requested he would pay every attention to the guest and act as his interpreter. They agreed to our wishes; a bed was immediately prepared for him; we dined together, and then took our leave of this poor fellow, and a painful leave it was.

We continued our pretended route, until we lost sight of the village, and then changed our course. We commiserated greatly the misfortunes of our poor companion, and feared that even the shoemaker would discover what he was, as he spoke French so very indifferently.[1] The day was closing very fast, and it behoved us to look out for a lodging for the night.

We advanced towards a large village, situated in our direction. It was quite dusk. We passed through it to the opposite extremity, by which time it was about eight o'clock. We were undecided how to act, and it began to rain very hard. We were met by an old man genteelly dressed, walking on very fast, to avoid getting wet. He stopped, evidently with a design to speak to us. We

[1] Batley was destined to escape. For the details of his adventures see Barklimore's letter in Appendix A.

accosted him in French; asked him what distance the palace of Baden was from us, and if we were likely to fall in shortly with any place at which we could put up for the night, in the direction we were then going. He replied in broken French, which we were pleased to hear, that it would be midnight before we could arrive at any sort of place that would answer our purpose; and as the weather was bad, and the hour so very late, he advised us to turn back with him to the village we had just passed, where there were excellent accommodations; and he would take upon himself to show us to a decent tavern, where we should be well attended to and made comfortable.

The kind and disinterested manner in which the old gentleman accosted us induced us to accept of his services. He accordingly conducted us to a genteel house, close to a glass manufactory, where the workmen lodged. We ordered supper, invited the old gentleman to partake of it, which, after some hesitation, he agreed to. I apprehended they might demand to see our passports, which lessened my enjoyment until nearly bed-time; but I then made myself quiet upon that head. We spoke to each other, and conversed with such of the workmen as could speak French. I am certain they took us for Frenchmen, which was a fortunate circumstance, and perhaps prevented their making any further inquiries. Shortly after supper our good friend departed, and we were shown to our chamber, where each had an excellent bed. The hail and rain which beat against the windows, convinced us of what we should have suffered had we not taken the good old man's advice.

We agreed to be off very early, lest any accident should prevent our proceeding altogether. This point being settled, each soon composed himself to sleep, and in a few

minutes were most soundly in the arms of Morpheus; nor did I open my wearied eyes, until I had been repeatedly called by my comrades the next morning. The weather was still very bad. However, we got our breakfast, and proceeded *en route* without asking to be directed to any particular place, in order that they might not suppose that we were unacquainted with the country. I knew it was necessary to keep to the southward, in order to avoid a chain of almost inaccessible mountains that would prevent our advancing into the interior. We were now surrounded with woods and deserts, and could not tell which way to turn or proceed. In this state of perplexity we luckily saw, at a distance, a peasant and a little boy loading a cart with wood. We made towards them, but it was a long time before we could make them understand that we had lost our way and wished to be directed towards Friburg, which we well knew to be to the southward of us. At length we succeeded, and the civil fellow left his boy and cart, and went with us nearly two miles in order to put us on the right road. We paid this honest and good creature for his trouble, though it was some time before we could prevail upon him to accept of anything.

About noon we passed the palace of the Margrave of Baden, and owing to the intricacies of the mountains that surrounded it, we were obliged to border upon it much closer than we wished. It had a romantic appearance. In one of the avenues through which we had to go, we perceived two officers on horseback. We immediately darted amongst the trees, and concealed ourselves until they had passed. We soon got on an immensely broad high road, when we saw a number of horsemen dressed in scarlet going before a carriage. The whole cavalcade was at full

speed. We rapidly turned off towards some huts, and barely escaped confronting this formidable party. The peasantry were all uncovered as the carriage passed, and from this we of course inferred that it was the royal equipage; and, on inquiry, we were told that the person in the carriage was the Duke of Baden's son, who had already assumed the title of king.[1] We were informed that we were in the proper direction for Friburg, and proceeded in great spirits.

We had to pass through several respectable villages on the highway. About six in the evening, in going through one, Barklimore being a good way in the rear, I heard him call out to us to stop, as there was a man who wanted to see our papers; but naturally we were in too great a haste to be retarded. The man certainly was looking very eagerly at us; but if he had been a police-officer he would not have hesitated to pursue us. He did not; and as our companion did not understand German, we inferred that his fears had made him misconstrue the fellow's meaning.

About seven we discovered another village in the direction we had to take. We approached a public-house, called for some beer, and inquired if we could be supplied with beds? "No," was the reply; but they directed us to another house where all the beds happened to be occupied; and these people sent us to a third, with no better success. We knew not what to do, and regretted much at not being able to remain in this little village for the night, as, from its appearance, we had no reason to be under the slightest

[1] It is impossible to say what O'Brien means by this. The hereditary prince of Baden, though in great favour with Napoleon, and married to Stephanie Beauharnais, his adopted daughter, was never made a king.

apprehension. A person, whom we took for a publican, seeing us in a state of suspense, addressed us in French, and said, "Gentlemen, you appear to want lodgings; there is a small town, about two or three miles farther on, where you can get good accommodation." We returned him thanks and appeared pleased at the intelligence; though, in fact, we dreaded being accommodated as he had described, lest, in the sequel, we might find ourselves accommodated *gratis*, with sundry extra cares and civilities forced upon us, much above our wants, and against our inclinations. I asked him if he did not suppose that the gate would be shut before we arrived. The sinister object of the question he did not see through, and to our great joy he replied that there were no gates at all, as the town was perfectly open. Upon this intelligence we resolved to proceed, although we determined to approach the place with great circumspection.

At about half-past nine we arrived at the town and it did not appear to be a place from which we could have much or anything to apprehend. We looked out for an inn, and, as usual, we resolved not to go to the first we should see, if we possibly could avoid it, nor in any case to enter any one that was not of an humble description.

At length we discovered one, and, from its appearance and locality, we were induced to enter it. We were disagreeably surprised; for we were shown into a genteel coffee-room, and, from the appearance of the guests, landlady, and servants, it was evident we had got into the very sort of inn which of all others we ought to avoid. However, it was too late to retreat. Hesitation would infallibly have exposed us to suspicion; and had we evinced any confusion, detection and apprehension would

undoubtedly have ensued. We therefore put a bold face on the matter, and with an air of nonchalance, as if we had got into the sort of place we had been accustomed to, and wished to find, I called for some wine, and my friends ordered supper.

I was, however, indisposed, and ordered the chambermaid to light me to bed, informing my companions that I did not intend to undress until they should come to bed; and that if they happened to discover the slightest symptoms of danger, I would be ready at an instant to decamp. One very fortunate circumstance was, that "mine host," Master Boniface, was disgustingly drunk, and although he often looked earnestly at us, as if he wished to ask us some questions, he was so far gone that he could not utter a syllable. I lay down on the bed full of anxiety; nor could I forget Barklimore's fears of the man who, as he supposed, had challenged him for his papers.

After their supper my friends came to bed. They informed me that they did not think that we were in any imminent danger, nor did they suppose that we were perfectly safe, as our security chiefly depended upon the state of the intoxication of the landlord. It was not very pleasant to have our liberties or lives dependent upon another man's drunkenness; and we came to the determination to rise before the fellow could become sober, to pay our reckoning, and be off. At twilight we dressed ourselves, and awakened the servants, who instantly went and informed their master that we were preparing to depart. It was evident that we were in imminent danger. The landlord soon appeared, and, to our great joy, was in such a state of stupefaction that he could scarcely open his eyes. He demanded whither we

were going so early? "To Strasbourg," was my reply. He observed, we should be there very soon, it being only five leagues distant. We were aware of that, and wished him a good morning. By ten we were in sight of Offenburg—made its circuit, and got on the road to Gigenbach, which we saw about six o'clock. We then crossed the river Kinzig, and proceeded on the direct road towards Tütlingen. I now perfectly recollected our route, from having so recently passed it with the Bavarians. At midnight we halted in a small poor village; got supplied with refreshments and a sort of bed. Barklimore had a severe fit of the fever and ague.

On the morning of the 22nd of September we got some breakfast, and proceeded. At about six we discovered a kind of fortress on the side of a mountain, over a small town. We advanced with all possible precaution; but as we approached, it appeared to be a place of little consequence, and we therefore walked forward boldly. We found ourselves close to the gate of a snug little town; and seeing no military or police-officers, we proceeded right through it. After passing the opposite gate, we stopped at a wine-house, refreshed ourselves, and were informed the name of the town was Hornberg. The next halting-place was Kriemhieldsach, where there was a post-house; it was about three or four leagues off, and on the verge of the Black Forest, which we had to march through before we arrived. All travellers, they informed us, preferred stopping at Hornberg, to going through so lonely and disagreeable a place as the Black Forest, and at so late an hour. However, we were exceptions to the general rule, and we marched on.

The Black Forest, so celebrated of late for Moreau's

retreat through it before the Austrians, is a name very appropriately given to this dreadful region, for I never in my life beheld a country so mountainous, dismal, and barren. It used formerly to be infested by banditti, and in the late wars, the Germans, lying concealed, used at convenient moments to issue forth and inflict the severest losses on the French troops; cutting off stragglers, capturing convoys, and making prisoners of all small detached corps. I was told that a French General, whose name I now forget, had been shot in his carriage whilst passing through the Forest, and that the postilions, who had heard the report of the rifle, never discovered his death until their arrival at Hornberg. We met with only two or three people before we got to Kriemhieldsach. The road on each side was lined with trees, and was admirably calculated for the tactics of banditti.

At about eleven we reached the post-house, rapped at the door, and demanded admittance.

"Who is there?—and what are you?" was asked by a person within.

"Three French travellers who want lodgings," was my reply.

The door was immediately opened, and we were readily shown upstairs into the public-room. We could willingly have dispensed with publicity, and have put up with "a room in private"; but, happily, the appearance of the guests inspired us with confidence. We called for supper, and desired they would prepare our beds. They complied, and without asking a single question, or betraying the least signs of suspicion or inquisitiveness.

Our friend Barklimore had been very much indisposed all day, but the inn was not the best calculated in the

world for a sick man's slumbers; for, as we demanded our beds, the family of the innkeeper and all his guests began to dance. The music was what the Germans call a "doodle-sack"—a species of that harsh and discordant instrument that we call a Scotch bagpipe. Waltzing was introduced. The scene became animated. The doctor forgot his illness, engaged a pretty partner, and began to dance with great glee. This company all observed, "What a lively, merry people you Frenchmen are!" I could not help smiling at the remark, nor could I refrain from reflecting upon the vast difference between waltzing at night with a pretty German partner, and sleeping in the mud in the open air, or in the still worse dungeons of Bitche. My other companion, Hewson, caught the spirit of the scene, and joined the dance. I, however, remained an exception to the general company, and never moved from the table until the dance was over, and then we all retired to bed.

On the 23rd, in the morning, our invalid friend was not the better for the inspirations of Terpsichore. He was scarcely able to move. I then found the benefit of having remained quiet, whilst they had been displaying their agility on the light fantastic toe. However, weak as the doctor was, we paid our bill and pursued our route. Early in the afternoon, having fallen in with a small village, we halted, refreshed ourselves, and went to bed very early. The doctor was extremely ill, and sorry for having so strenuously supported the French character.

24th.—We departed as early as usual, and passed round several towns, and at eight in the evening stopped at a small village, and got refreshed. The people were particularly attentive, speaking often in praise of the French

nation: they had very frequently some of our countrymen billeted on them. We left Rothweil upon the right, and were told we should be early the next day at Tütlingen, where I was in hopes of being favourably received. We were in great spirits, passed the evening pleasantly, and imagined that our principal difficulties had been surmounted.

On Sunday, the 25th, we breakfasted, and passed on towards the much-wished-for town. At eleven we were in sight of it. I proposed to my companions to remain concealed in an adjacent wood, while I went into the town to try what could be done; they agreed to it; and we only regretted not having our companion Batley with us.

I entered the town about noon, and went where I expected some assistance, from my former knowledge of the place when conducted thither by the Bavarians, and the hopes then held out to me; but, to my great mortification, I could obtain none. I returned with these doleful tidings to my companions, assured them there was no danger, and went back again to use every effort to procure passports.

The second time I met with some people who promised to assist as much as they could in promoting my wishes. They got my companions into the town, and placed them upstairs in a friend's tavern; there, in daily expectation of being supplied with what we wanted, we remained concealed until Tuesday, 4th October, a period of eight days, when, with depressed spirits, gloomy faces, and light purses, we were conducted before daybreak on the direct road to Memmingen, as we had determined to take that course to Saltzburg. We had been regularly deceived by some of those who had promised me assistance in the

event of my ever coming again that way, and had only to thank our stars that we had not been betrayed.

During our stay in this place we procured an old German map, which we found of very material service to us. About noon we passed Mosskirch, keeping about two miles to the right of it. After nightfall we crossed the river Andalspach, and determined to stop at the first safe place we could find. We soon discovered a house on the roadside, and it appeared to be an inn. We entered, and called for bread and wine, which we found was all the provision that the miserable place afforded. This was good enough for us; but a light-horseman acted as waiter, and he spoke French, which created many unpleasant apprehensions in my mind. We asked for beds, and they declared they had not any; but the light-horseman told us that there was clean straw in the stable, to which we were welcome. We quitted the place, although we had been informed that the next village was more than a league distant, for I was not at all pleased with my military waiter. He was too kind and inquisitive.

We pursued our route at least a league through the centre of a forest. The road was very good. At last we heard a prodigious shouting ahead, and could not account for such a noise at so late an hour; however, it announced the proximity of a village—perhaps the one that had been described to us. We advanced apace. The shouting, singing, and confusion of noises still continued. We shortly discovered an immense concourse of people, of both sexes, on the road, coming towards us. They passed us decorated with ribands and cockades, from which we concluded it was a festival or wedding. We now saw the village very plainly, and soon arrived at it.

We went to the first public-house we could discover, but it was so thronged that they could not receive us. By a great deal of persuasion we prevailed on them to direct us to another, where we got beds and refreshments. There were a great number of police-officers and soldiers in the first house, but they were so much elated and amused that they could not attend to make any observations upon us.

We paid excessively dear here for everything; and in the morning we quitted it, and proceeded towards Waldsee, a town of Suabia, with a castle. At about six in the evening we passed it, leaving it at a respectable distance on the right. At eight we stopped at a small village, where we got beds and supper. At daylight we recommenced our journey, and about four in the afternoon we discovered the river Iler, which we had to cross. We were quitting the territory of Wurtemberg, and entering Bavaria. We saw a bridge, but imagined also that we could distinguish a look-out house or turnpike on it, which alarmed us not a little; so we concealed ourselves in a wood until dusk, and then advanced, and crossed the bridge without any difficulty. There were several houses on each side, but, fortunately, we saw no police-officer, or any person that could cause the least apprehension. We continued our route above a league, when we came to a tavern thronged with waggoners; but we got a private room and went very early to bed.

Our friend Barklimore was now seized with a very severe fit of fever, and it behoved us to be very circumspect in Bavaria, lest we should be obliged to quit our sick companion. The stimuli of danger and necessity enabled him the next morning to attempt the day's fatigue. We walked very slowly in consideration of his illness.

At night we slept at a village; and not only were the people civil, but our landlady got our shirts washed for us, and dried by the next morning. This was not a slight task, considering how long we had worn them. We were much annoyed, however, by the landlord. He was in the last stage of consumption, and the short remainder of his life seemed to be devoted to inquisitiveness. In vain did we tell him we were French travellers going to Kaufbeuern, where we had many friends. His "whys" and "wherefores," and his "what-thens" and "where-nexts" were most inconvenient to travellers in our suspicious circumstances. We assured him that from Kaufbeuern we should, in all probability, proceed to Saltzburg, but nothing would satisfy his curiosity; and whilst his wife was in the act of contributing to the refreshing of our bodies by washing our shirts, he was tormenting our minds by questions, one-tenth of which had we answered, or at least answered honestly, we should infallibly have seen ourselves in a few days on the high road to Bitche.

CHAPTER XV

Leaving Kaufbeuern on the left hand—Crossing the Wardach and the Lech—A welcome ferry-boat—The town of Weilheim—A long and exhausting march—The soporific of fatigue—The ferry over the river Inn—Frightened at a soldier—A false alarm—Crossing the river—The town of Reichenhall—Our approach to the Bavarian frontiers—The increase of dangers—Passing barriers with success—A supposition that we were in the Austrian dominions—A woeful miscalculation and a narrow escape from its fatal consequences—An unexpected demand for passports—An evasion—The Bavarian and Austrian confines—Our extreme danger—Anticipating the galleys—A track through a wood at the foot of a mountain—A flight—The boundary passed, and the fugitives in the Emperor's dominions—Soldiers in ambush—The fugitives captured—Feigning to be Americans from Altona—Rage of the Bavarian guard at being outwitted.

It was on the 8th of October (1808) that we took leave of our consumptive and inquisitive landlord, and left Kaufbeuern on the left hand in passing. If his lungs, throughout life, had been as actively employed in asking questions as they had been whilst we were with him, the only wonder is that they had lasted him so long. We crossed the Wardach, and directed our course towards Schöngau. At about six in the evening it began to snow so very hard that we took shelter in an adjacent village for the night. It was small, and suited us very well. At the public-house there was a shoemaker at work for the family, and they had the kindness to allow him to repair our shoes.

The next morning we proceeded on our journey, though the weather was very severe, snowing, and blowing right in our faces. Barklimore was much better, and we did not deem it prudent to remain long in one place. At noon, finding an excellent halting-house, in consequence of the severity of the weather, and being wet to the skin, we stopped at it: this little public-house supplied us with a large blazing fire. We dried our clothes, got refreshed, and went to bed early. At daybreak we recommenced our journey; and, at about eleven, we saw Schöngau, which appeared to be a very strong place, and consequently to us a place of danger. We could discover no possibility of crossing the Lech without passing close by, if not through it. We consulted what was best to be done, and, without hesitation, decided upon turning to the left and keeping on the banks of that river, until we could find some other place to cross over. We accordingly continued to the northward about eight miles, when we perceived a ploughman at work with some strong horses in an adjacent field. It immediately struck me that, by mounting, we might be able to swim over the river on the back of the horses. I accordingly made the proposal to the ploughman, and endeavoured to strike a bargain. The stupid lout took all as a joke, and laughed me to scorn; but when he found that I was really in earnest, he considered me little less than mad to entertain such an idea. At last, after incessantly repeating the word *schiff*, he pointed to a ferry-boat on the opposite side. On this we came close down to the river; and, after waving and making signals for some time, we had the satisfaction of seeing a man put off in a boat. Notwithstanding that, from the late heavy falls of rain,

the flood was very strong, he conducted himself across in a very masterly style, and then ferried us over in a manner equally satisfactory. We joyfully paid him his usual fare, which was about one penny, and by eight at night we had retraced our steps on the opposite bank by a distance of eight miles, for the purpose of regaining the high road. Weilheim was the next large town in our route, but we halted at a small village. We were dreadfully knocked up, and having obtained refreshment, we went to bed, and found that the best soporific on earth was fatigue. Not all "the drowsy syrups of the world" could "medicine us to a more sweet sleep" than the long and dreary march we had taken.

In the morning we proceeded on our journey, and by ten we made a circuit round Weilheim, with its castle, crossed the Amper, and directed our course for Tötz. At night we sought shelter in a peasant's hut, at the foot of the lofty range of mountains that separate Bavaria from the Tyrol.

At eleven the next morning we discovered the town of Tötz, in a valley on the Amper. In general, the sight of a town is gratifying to a traveller, and gratifying in proportion to its size. In our case the reverse was the fact; and every town was an object of alarm, and especially if it were of any considerable magnitude or population. Tötz appeared a place difficult to pass. We turned to the southward, and after marching many a dreary league over mountains, and through forests and morasses, we luckily discovered a bridge, which we crossed without any interruption. I observed on the river a number of floats and rafts which were admirably constructed, and they were adroitly steered with the stream,

which was excessively rapid. Even this semblance of an approach to nautical affairs filled my mind with thoughts of my profession, and gave gladness to my heart. Having passed the bridge, we were enticed to enter a public-house, where we procured some fish, bread, and beer for dinner. There were a number of both sexes intoxicated in this house; they all appeared to be employed in conducting the timber down the river, and reminded me of Billingsgate and Wapping ballast-heavers.[1] Although it rained excessively hard, we were under the necessity of proceeding. Barklimore got a lift in a waggon for three or four miles, and the waggoner declined receiving payment for it. I must, in justice to continental inhabitants, observe that this feature of disinterestedness is frequent on the Continent; how far it may be common in our own country I leave to every man's experience.

On the 12th, at daylight, we recommenced our route towards Neubeuern, and in the evening, at eight, we stopped for the night at a small village, where the inn was very decent, and we were well entertained. In the morning we parted from these good folks, but who were apparently not very partial to the French.

At eleven we espied Neubeuern. It is a fort, situated on the side of a hill, on a branch of the river Inn; we were on the opposite side to it, and were very much confused and at a loss how to get across. There appeared a small town also, which I suppose bore the same name. We approached the banks of the river, and discovered a ferry-boat on the opposite side. On each bank sheers were erected, with a stay or rope from one side to the other, to which the ferry-boat was made fast with a long rope and traveller to traverse upon the stay. It was constructed

in such a manner, that (let the current be however rapid) one man was sufficient to conduct the ferry-boat across. There was, on our side, a shed with seats for passengers to rest themselves, and wait for their conveyance. In this place we found an old man, who, from his garb and apron, we supposed to be either a hatter or dyer. He spoke no other language than German; he lived (as he made us understand) in the opposite village, and was actually a hatter by trade. He informed us that the ferryman was getting his dinner, and would not attend until after one o'clock. We inquired whether the fortress was strong, although, whether strong or weak, it was evidently strong enough to capture us, and to keep us in durance vile. The answer was, that it contained "only a few veterans," a species of force we particularly objected to; for, although we could get to windward of raw recruits, it was not easy to impose upon old campaigners. This hatter seemed to measure the inside of our heads, and his inquisitive disposition was very far from agreeable to us, under our awkward circumstances. He at last asked us if we were going to Saltzburg. This was a convenient question, for our answering in the affirmative gave us the plausible opportunity of inquiring how far Saltzburg was off. "Fifteen leagues" was the reply, and I need not say that not one of us felt his heart rebound at the news that he was so far from this point towards his journey's end.

We dreaded lest there should be an examination of travellers, and an inspection of passports, so near to the frontier garrison; but in vain did we sound the hatter on the subject.

One o'clock arrived; the ferryman approached, but he was accompanied by a soldier, with an immense feather,

which waved so terrifically in the air that it seemed ominous of our capture and subsequent fate. We dared not ask the hatter another question, lest it should create suspicions, and although we had time to make any escape, we reflected that we had no other means of crossing the river. In fact, we were unsettled. We considered and reconsidered, resolved and abandoned our resolution. Consternation certainly prevailed over our councils, which ended in our agreeing to wander in the fields, and watch what might be the object of the soldier with his immense feather. The poet[1] has the line,

Pleased with a feather, tickled with a straw,

but never were men less pleased with a feather than I and my companions. We agreed that if this man made towards us, we were to separate in different directions, and thus try to baffle him; if he took the common high road, we were to conclude that he had not come across the river for our capture. We were in a great state of alarm. At length the boat touched the shore. The son of Mars, with the feather in his cocked-hat, jumped out of the boat. Every eye was upon him, and each of us had one leg in advance ready to fly his approach, when, to our inexpressible joy, he did not condescend to look upon us, but pursued his course towards the high road. Never was contempt more welcome to the disregarded or despised. We got into the ferry-boat with the hatter, and landed on the opposite banks.

The fare was a mere trifle. We had to change a florin, and, although we would willingly have paid five times the sum, if we could have afforded it, to get clear off, we

[1] Pope, in the "Essay on Man."

waited to have our change regularly made out, which took some time, as the pieces were so difficult to be comprehended, and the ferry-man had to borrow a part from the hatter. But we dreaded, if we had not been thus particular, they might have suspected that all was not right, and given information at the garrison. Matters being arranged, we continued our route carelessly, until we were out of sight of the fortress; then we pushed on as fast as we possibly could, to make up for the delay of the ferry.

About seven o'clock in the evening we halted at a very convenient house on the roadside; got beds and supper; and at daylight recommenced our walk. We were now on the high road to Reichenhall, the last Bavarian town we should have to pass. Each of us was in excellent spirits, and almost confident of getting clear, from the success that had lately attended us. We exerted all our force to get as soon as possible into the Austrian territories, and walked at least twelve leagues this day, till, being very much fatigued, we agreed to proceed to a village on the borders of the lake of Kempsee, and to stop there for the night. We soon made out a public-house; got supper, and retired to bed. The people were civil, and not at all inquisitive.

We rose early and pursued our journey. We met several people, but none, to our joy, seemed to possess the slightest spirit of curiosity. We found out that we were still three leagues from Reichenhall. We advanced apace, but with precaution, knowing how particular they generally are on the frontiers. We also agreed, if we could get immediately safe into Austria, to avoid Saltzburg altogether, and make directly for Trieste. Barkli-

more was becoming exhausted. The roads were rough and dreary, and not a village or human dwelling was to be seen, even to the utmost verge of the horizon. As we drew near to Reichenhall, we overtook two waggons, and prevailed upon one of the waggoners to give a lift to our lame and disabled companion. Never was an arrangement more fortunate, for no sooner had he got accommodated in the waggon than two Bavarian *gendarmes* came in view. Hewson and myself sought concealment on the other side of the road, and thus did we escape detection.

For several days past I had observed that all the notices and directions on the roadside were both in German and in French. The road we were travelling was quite new, and it appeared that it had been made since the battle of Austerlitz, in order to facilitate the future entry of the French into the Austrian dominions. It was on a magnificent scale, and must have cost immense sums, being cut through stupendous rocks and mountains. It was the finest military road I had ever beheld, and evinced the gigantic project that Napoleon must have had in contemplation.[1]

We were apparently within two miles of the town, and we begged the waggoner to let our friend descend. The too good-natured fellow offered to carry him into the town, and we were obliged to pretend that we had some idea of stopping at a friend's house in the neighbourhood. A friend's house in the neighbourhood!—never were poor beings more friendless or more unacquainted with a neighbourhood.

We were now at our wits' ends, and it was too late to

[1] O'Brien alludes to the Wagram campaign, then only six months in the future.

even attempt to make a circuit of the town, in order to smuggle ourselves into the Austrian territories, which must be at least four or five miles off. The surrounding mountains seemed calculated to baffle the most experienced traveller in any effort to get through their passes by night, or even by day; and what could be done by poor ignorant and forlorn fugitives like us?

All matters having been deliberately weighed and considered, we resolved to take our abode in a public-house, at a little distance on the roadside; and this, we trusted, would be our last night in Bavaria. We accordingly entered it, and found several decent people. I made our host understand that our comrade had been taken suddenly ill, that I wished to get him to bed as soon as we could, and that we preferred remaining with him to going into town, as it was then late. He politely told us we should be instantly accommodated.

At about half-past eight we were shown to bed, and were in great spirits. The next morning would decide our destiny, and we were very sanguine. We knew it was necessary to be cautious also in Austria, but considered that the great point would be attained when we should be out of the power of the Confederation of the Rhine. I confess I sometimes thought how unfortunate we should be if arrested in the vicinity of the last Bavarian town, and again conducted back to the horrible *Mansion of Tears*. I frankly declare, I would have preferred death as the alternative.

At the dawn of day on the 17th of October we rose, ordered a cup of coffee each, and pushed forward with great circumspection for the town of Reichenhall, and saw very few people moving. Everything, we imagined,

favoured us; but the next moment we discovered a bridge, which we inevitably must pass; at the end of it was a turnpike and the Bavarian colours, blue and white, which we were tolerably well acquainted with. There were two men who appeared at a short distance from the turnpike. We were on the bridge. The two men entered a house close to the turnpike. We advanced rapidly. Supposing it to be a most favourable opportunity, we passed the turnpike very fortunately, and turned short round to the right, which led us directly as we wished, and also clear of the town. We then passed another barrier, where there was not a house to be seen, and being so near to that we just passed, we conjectured that both were superintended by the same people.

Having anticipated all aggravations of difficulties as we approached the frontier, we were overjoyed at finding the system of police not so strict as we expected: we now considered ourselves safe. We advanced a mile, and thought ourselves in the Austrian territories. Our happiness was inconceivable. Our dangers, we thought, were over, and we were now in a country which, though not in alliance with England, had been subsidised on former occasions to the extent of so many millions by her, and had so common a cause with us in putting down the general enemy. We felt almost as if we were at home. So secure were we that we began to be less attentive to dangers of any sort.

The road became excessively heavy; and, although I had passed through by far worse roads under more difficult circumstances, my prospects of triumph made me fastidious or sportive. A cut, or pathway, appeared to lead through fields in one direction, and I chose to take it, as I thought it would shorten our distance, while Hewson

pursued the high-road in preference. On looking back, I found that Barklimore was following my steps a good way behind, though in a short time I entirely lost sight of Hewson. I had made an obtuse angle, and saved some distance, and I soon got into the road again; but, to my great uneasiness, in vain did I look for my friend. I conjectured that, although he had the longest route, he must have walked so very fast as to more than make up for the difference; and that, consequently, he was ahead of me. Presently, to my great astonishment and utter dismay, I made the woeful discovery that we were still in the Bavarian territories; for I perceived close to me a turnpike, with the adjacent house bearing the Bavarian arms. Fortunately, the door was shut, and I passed it with a palpitating heart, thanking Heaven for my hair-breadth escape. I then quickened my pace; and, looking back with great anxiety, to my unspeakable joy I found that Barklimore had passed with equal success.

I now became exceedingly alarmed for the safety of our friend Hewson, and concluded that, under the idea that he was in the Austrian dominions, he might have incautiously approached the barrier we had just escaped, and have been captured. I stopped to wait Barklimore's coming up, that we might counsel what was best to be done. In the midst of our perplexity and distress, to my unspeakable joy I perceived Hewson a long way ahead of us, and making towards us with precipitation. How he could have got so far in advance was to me inexplicable. I hastened towards him, and expressed my astonishment at his separating from us at such a critical moment. He briefly retaliated, and said, that as we had cut off such a large angle by crossing the fields, he naturally concluded

that we were further advanced than himself. But there was no time to be lost in recriminations; for our danger was extreme. Hewson, with much trepidation, told us that we were still on Bavarian ground, and that a short way in advance he had come to the line of demarcation between the two countries, and at the nearest point of which there was a barrier, with a guard; and he added, "The Austrian officer had stopped me, and demanded my passport. With all the presence of mind I could assume," said Hewson, "I told him that my companions, who were following me, had all our papers, and he desired me to wait until you arrived, but I contrived to elude his vigilance, and have hastened to acquaint you with our danger."

We received this woeful intelligence with pallid faces and knit brows, but our alarm was increased when Hewson continued, "I met the wife of the man who looks out at yon Bavarian gate, or turnpike, and she asked me if I had shown my passport and papers to her husband; of course I answered that I had."

Here, then, we were in as desperate a situation as any we had ever been in. Never had we had to contend with dangers more numerous or extreme. It appeared but too evident to us, that, when the woman told her husband of what Hewson had stated to her, a pursuit of us would be commenced, and a hue and cry raised for our apprehension. If the Austrian officer had refused to let Hewson pass without a passport when he was unsuspected, it was evident that he would not let us go through when the Bavarian soldiers were in chase of us. It was hopeless to go directly to the Austrian guard, confess who and what we were, and surrender ourselves as prisoners, on the confidence of the amity which had formerly existed between England and

Austria, and of the good feelings which the Austrians ought to entertain towards the English. Whichever way we turned, new difficulties presented themselves, and we were distracted with the thought of being taken after having overcome so many dangers, travelled so many hundred miles, and arrived at a point at which even a few yards over an imaginary line of separation might save us.

I instantly proposed that we should try to elude and pass the Austrian guard by avoiding the barrier, and crossing the boundary how we could, at any other point; and then, if we were taken, our last resource would be to claim the protection of the Austrian officer, as English subjects, and formerly, though not now, the allies of the emperor. At any risk, even at the cost of our lives, we were to avoid falling into the hands of the Bavarians, for then our inevitable fate would be a journey in chains back to the Mansion of Tears, a trial at Metz, and a sentence to the galleys.

Not a moment was lost. I surveyed the country, and espied a narrow pathway that led into a thick wood at the foot of an immense mountain. Into this by-path we immediately struck, and proceeded as rapidly as the nature of the track would admit of our using our legs. We expected to be pursued by the Austrian troops; and our only hope was to get so far into their territory, that, when captured, they would not think of returning us to the dreaded Bavarians.

We pursued the route with all possible speed, running, climbing, crawling, and scrambling, as the nature of the ground admitted or required, until at length we stopped, out of breath, in the middle of the wood, and, to our great

joy, heard not the sound of a human voice or footstep in pursuit.

We took breath, and again proceeded. It was impossible to clamber the immense mountain, for its sides were perfectly inaccessible, and often to a great height perpendicular; and yet we cast a longing, lingering look upon its rugged steeps, and thought that if we could only gain one of its caves or fastnesses, our security would be perfect.

We kept the path through the wood, and in a short time we got a sight of the high-road; and, to the joy of exhausted lungs and palpitating hearts, we found that we were full a mile in the rear of the Austrian barrier. This was indeed happiness: happiness so great, so unexpected, and so much in contrast with all the circumstances of our previous position, that we distrusted even our senses that so plainly assured us of the fact.

We now set firm foot upon the spacious high-road, and were about to proceed with the elated feelings that made us think we could defy the world, and laugh at the book of fate or the tricks of the treacherous and fickle goddess, when, at our first step, a hoarse voice called on us to surrender, and up sprung four German soldiers from their hiding-place, behind a rock on the verge of the wood, and each presented a rifle at our heads. We concluded they were bandits, and had little to apprehend from them, as we had no property to lose, and knew that such gentry were not desirous of taking life, when there was no advantage to be derived from shedding blood. But we were soon undeceived, for whilst three of the fellows kept the muzzles of their pieces at our heads, the foremost of them very politely took off his hat to us. This was very like the scene in *Gil Blas*, when the

beggar piteously implored the traveller, in the name of the Holy Virgin, to drop a marvadie in his cap, whilst he kept his carbine aimed at his head, as a broad hint of what he was to suffer if he was uncharitable. But the cases were not in point, and these turned out to be Austrian soldiers, and the leader civilly asked us for our passports. I showed him an old pocket-book, and pretended to look for mine, and which of course I could not find; but I showed him some envelopes in the German character, which I had provided for such an emergency. The phlegmatic German sergeant defeated all my excuses, by simply declaring that he was not a judge in such difficult cases, not a scholar (in fact, he could not read), and that his duty was to take us before his officer, pointing to the direction in which we knew the Austrian barrier lay. "Will you surrender?" said he; and what option of an answer was left to us in any case, when each had a rifle presented to his head? "Most willingly," I replied, "but are we not in the Emperor's dominions in *Kaisersland?*" How my heart beat with joy when he answered the "Yes, Sir,"—*Ya Mynheer.* Never did the sun behold more willing prisoners. We accompanied our captors to the officer. He was a young man, and spoke no other language than the German. However, we comprehended perfectly that he was displeased at our attempting to elude him and the guard. He examined us, and we made him understand as well as we could, "That we were Americans, who had escaped from the Danes at Altona, and were making the best of our way to Trieste, where we expected to procure a passage to our native country." He desired one of his soldiers to go and inform the Bavarian at the next barrier that he wanted him.

This circumstance occasioned me much uneasiness. I endeavoured to learn from him if he intended to send us to Salzburg. He said we should be conveyed to that city immediately. We were much pleased at this intelligence, as we dreaded being given up to the Bavarian, who now had arrived, and was astonished when the officer told him that he had let us pass without examining or interrogating us. Our *friend* from the barrier was excessively nettled at the information, and, had we been handed over to his tender mercies, he would have amply revenged himself for the manner in which our success had exposed him to the taunts of the officer of the rival nation.

CHAPTER XVI

Our arrival at Salzburg—The Director of Police—Perseverance in our tale of being Americans—Suspected of being spies—Austrian feelings favourable towards England and Englishmen—Confession of the truth—Treated well as English officers—An excellent inn—A kind governor—Great civility—Despatches from Vienna—Passports ordered for us—A remittance of money from Vienna—Passports for Trieste—Our journey—German students and dog Latin—Clagenfurt—Laibach—Banditti—A mountain scene—An Irish watch-fire—Arrival at Trieste—Ecstasies at beholding the Gulf and the English frigate in the offing—Our embarkation—Picked up by the *Amphion's* boat—An old friend and shipmate—Discovering an enemy—A desperate and unsuccessful fight—The killed and wounded—Shot through the right arm—Valour of Lieut. G. M. Jones—His wound—Excessive kindness of the *Amphion's* captain and officers—The *Spider* brig—Corfu—Malta—Sir Alex. Ball—Unexpected meeting with old friends escaped from Bitche—Promoted to a lieutenancy in the *Warrior* (a seventy-four)—The glories of the naval service opened to me.

We had now reached about the noon of the 17th of October 1808, when an escort or guard was appointed for our custody, and we were put upon our march for Salzburg. Our fate depended on what might be the momentary disposition of the Austrian Government towards England and America. We resolved to persevere in our American fiction, if nothing arose to induce us to the contrary. At about two we arrived at Salzburg.

This is a fine fortified city, the capital of the duchy of Salzburg, with a strong castle on the mountain. It has a university, and two noble palaces. The town lies on both sides of the river Salza, and is situated between three mountains. The buildings of the town were very remarkable, but we were not in a humour, or under circumstances, to attend to such subjects, or to indulge in the taste of amateurs.

We were conducted to one building, the town house, where we were put under strict interrogatories by the Director of the Police. Our inquisitor, however, was a well-bred, gentlemanly officer, and he spoke four languages with great fluency.

He first asked us in French, what countrymen we were. We would not understand him. He then put to us the same question both in Italian and German: we were equally ignorant. He next asked us our country in English. Now we understood him, and promptly answered that we were Americans.

"How have you contrived," he demanded, "to enter the Emperor of Austria's dominions without regular passports? You will be considered as spies."

I laconically asked him, Whether spies would not furnish themselves with passports, in order to facilitate their designs? and I further asked him, What knowledge of a country could be obtained by spies, in our destitute condition and humble class of life? We had not a sheet of paper or a black-lead pencil amongst us, and were, in point of money, paupers.

This gentleman seemed struck by these obvious truths, but he insisted upon our giving some account of ourselves.

I was the spokesman, and I replied as follows: "We

belonged," I said, "to an American ship which was taken by the Danes (under the Berlin and Milan decrees) for having been boarded and overhauled by two English frigates in the English Channel, on her passage to the Baltic.[1] Our names," I added, "are Manuel (*alias* Hewson), chief mate; Henderson, surgeon (*alias* Barklimore); and myself, Lincoln, who unfortunately happened to be a passenger."

He then requested that each of us would make out, in writing, a regular specification of who and what we were, and bring it to him the next morning. He should send us to a tavern for the night, and requested we would not stir from it without his permission. He expressed also his astonishment at our having crossed the Continent without being able to speak any other language than English, and added, *That if we were even Englishmen, we had nothing to fear from the Austrian Government.* My God! I never felt more happy than at hearing these words—how they soothed my mind! I however feigned not to comprehend him perfectly, that my ears might again hear them repeated; and my heart rebounded with joy when he reiterated that, were we English, we should have nothing to fear from the Austrians. I felt so confident that a man in his station would not tell an untruth, that I was actually on the point of declaring who and what we really were. However, I governed myself and restrained my desire to relate the truth, although I am at a loss to explain how I was able to do

[1] Napoleon's last wild extension of the Continental System provided that a neutral ship should be considered fair prize if it had visited a British port, or even been searched by a British cruiser.

so; and, turning to my companions, I observed that we had better proceed to the tavern, as we were very much fatigued. The Director ordered a sergeant to show us the way. We took a cordial leave of this worthy old gentleman, and followed our guide.

At the tavern we were received as American travellers, and had an excellent supper and good beds; we felt superlatively happy. What a vast difference between our present situation and that of only a few hours before, when between the two barriers!

The next morning (Tuesday the 18th) we rose early, and endeavoured to dress ourselves as well as we could—at least, as well as our tattered garments would admit of; so we procured a change of linen, and prepared to wait on the Director. We agreed to continue the American story, until we could be well assured of the disposition of the Austrian Government towards Englishmen. At ten we visited the Director, who again expressed great astonishment at our travelling with such success so great a distance, and wondered that we had nothing whatever about us to certify that we were Americans. "Mr. Manuel" was at the same time writing his declaration. The old gentleman again observed to me that there were frequently Englishmen passing through Salzburg, who had escaped from France, and who always found an asylum in Austria. I paid very great attention to this important information. The chief mate had now finished his declaration; and "Mr. Lincoln, passenger," was to begin next. I really could not reconcile it to myself to draw up a false declaration, especially as it appeared that we ran no risk in declaring the truth; and I therefore pointed out to the others the consequences that such a step might

occasion, with the certainty of being found out, as no doubt the court of Vienna would make every necessary inquiry, through their consul at Altona, before they would pay any credit to our statement. The result of this would of course be that we should be found impostors, and perhaps not be believed when we declared what we were in reality. Making a virtue of necessity was our best policy. They both agreed that my remarks were just; and I was requested by them to take the old gentleman aside, and make him acquainted with the whole of the circumstances. I accordingly did so, and proved to him by a certificate,[1] which I kept always sewed up in my clothes, that we were British officers. He said it had appeared to him at first sight that we were English prisoners-of-war, who had escaped from the French. I related the whole of our history. He regretted much that he could not instantly grant us passports, since it was necessary to acquaint the Government at Vienna, and have their sanction, but he said we should have an answer in fifteen days at most; and he jocosely added, "You have been five years nearly in France, so you cannot have any objection to remain amongst us for a few days." He was excessively kind; and I could not avoid communicating to him that our finances were reduced to the lowest ebb. The kind old man soon comforted me on this score, by stating that, whilst we were detained, the Austrian Government would allow us a certain sum per diem, in proportion to our respective ranks. He begged that we would make ourselves as comfortable as possible at our

[1] This certificate I have still by me. It was given me by Lieut. Henry T. Lutwidge, our second lieutenant, a worthy officer, in Verdun, on 21st February 1807, and now a commander.

inn, told us to dismiss all care and anxiety from our minds, and requested, rather than ordered us, to keep ourselves within doors, until we heard further from him.

We took our leave most respectfully and gratefully; and as we returned to the tavern, we could not help contrasting this urbanity and kindness with the brutal severity which it had been our unhappy lot to experience for so many years. The effect of kindness towards the distressed is to elevate the character of those that bestow and those that receive it.

Mr. Hewson, this evening, wrote to his friend Mr. Concannon, at Vienna, who had been a *détenu* in Verdun and obtained his liberty (this gentleman was subsequently member for Coventry), to beg him to use his influence with the authorities in our behalf.

The Director sent daily his compliments "to the American gentlemen (for out of policy towards France we were still considered under this character), and requested to know how we were;" and the landlady and waiters declared, that, until they had seen *us*, they had imagined that all Americans were negroes. In the dusk of the evening we sometimes contrived to steal out and reconnoitre the town and suburbs; and I had fixed on a plan of escape, in the event of the Austrian Government coming to a resolution to give us up to the cruel and hated enemy. Perhaps the suspicion was not very worthy of us, and could only be justified by what we had suffered at the hands of the French.

We had been ten days and nights in this sort of indulgent durance, when, on the eleventh morning, before we were out of bed, an officer rapped at our door, and told us that the Director wished to see one of us immediately.

Hewson sprang out of bed, dressed himself quickly, and obeyed the summons. During our friend's absence, Barklimore and myself were in a state of great perplexity. It rushed into my mind that the French or Bavarian governments might have demanded us from the Austrians. This apprehension overwhelmed me; but I concealed my emotions, strong as they were, from my friend, who at the time was suffering greatly from fever and ague.

Hewson shortly returned, and his countenance soon dissipated all our apprehensions, for his joy was so excessive that in vain did he endeavour to put on dismal looks in order to worry us. With an assumed air of sorrow, he told us that he much feared we were to be sent back to France. But we were not so ignorant of physiognomy that we could not perceive that he was almost bursting with some happy intelligence. At last he congratulated us that we were at length free men—our liberty was secured as firmly as if we had taken "a bond from Fate." In fact, the Director had received a despatch from Vienna, in which the Austrian Government had acknowledged us as English subjects and officers, and in which they had directed him to give us passports to proceed wherever we pleased; and the Director added that we were now at liberty, and that we might quit the town that day if we wished. Good and gracious God! what intelligence to people who have been nearly five years in severe and bitter slavery! We sprang out of bed, fell on our knees, and, with hearts full of gratitude to our Great Creator for His unbounded mercies and goodness, we greeted each other as free people.

We instantly agreed to wait upon our worthy friend, the Director, and evince to him how grateful we were for his attention and kindness. He received us in the most

handsome manner, and appeared as much elated as if he had been in our situation. He wished to know how we meant to travel to Trieste? We answered, on foot, as our finances were low; though we dreaded the doctor's incapacity, his last fever having been so severe that he had been bled and blistered several times; but he was now somewhat better, though weak.

Our passport for Trieste was, during this time, making out, and in half an hour we were to return for it. In the meantime we went back to the tavern to make the necessary preparations, and get some breakfast. It was a luxurious meal. The moment we entered, the landlord presented us with an answer to Mr. Hewson's letter, from his friend at Vienna. It informed us of the success that had attended our application at that city, with respect to our passports, and contained an order on his banker at Salzburg, to supply us with what money we might deem necessary to defray our expenses to Trieste, and enable us to travel with ease and comfort. Providence appeared too bountiful. We waited on the banker, got the sum necessary, and called on the worthy Director to give him the intelligence. He appeared much pleased, congratulated us on our success, and ordered our passports to be made out to go by the diligence. This proved very fortunate for our sick companion.

The hour of departure arrived; and now behold us in the diligence, free from all terrors, and elated to the highest pitch at the consciousness that we were on the road to the margin of the sea, where we should once more behold "The meteor flag of England," and have it again waving over our heads.

Our journey was interesting. The first night we had

to pass through intricate roads amidst immense mountains covered with snow. The appearance of the inhabitants was in unison with the scenery. They were grotesque in dress, and seemed wild. The guard of the diligence was inclined to be insolent, and evidently abetted the inn-keepers in their "tricks upon travellers"—tricks of extortion. However, at the fourth stage we got rid of this bad specimen of Nature's workmanship, for we were removed from the diligence, and put into a waggon, which took us to Villach, and thence to Clagenfurt. The waggon was without springs, and, over the rough mountainous roads, we were jolted almost to death. Our sick friend must have suffered dreadfully; but he bore his pains with his usual fortitude and self-command.

In the waggon we were eight in number; our companions were boys who were returning to the university after the vacation. They annoyed us much with their colloquial or dog Latin; and the young rogues made us the subject of their jokes and satire, on the supposition that we could not understand them.

At Clagenfurt we found that we had missed our road to Trieste by several leagues, owing to those who had inspected our passports at Villach not having given us the necessary information. At first we were informed that we must go back to that town to have the error rectified; but, upon explaining the difficulties and hardships that attended retracing our steps, the authorities very kindly did away with every difficulty, and we retired to the Golden Sun tavern, where we had supper and beds.

We were here apprised that we had better perform the next day's journey on foot, as the mountains were so excessively high that if we had a carriage we should be

obliged to walk the greater part of the way. This information made us determine to proceed on foot the next morning; and we accordingly rose at daybreak (Sunday, 30th October), and commenced our journey. Such mountains as we passed this day I never before beheld. We walked twelve leagues before seven in the afternoon, six of them almost ascending perpendicularly, and the remaining six descending in the opposite direction—the great road was zig-zag, but we did not keep to it. We at last arrived at a small post-town, at the foot of a prodigious precipice. After getting some refreshments, we took post for Laibach, and travelled all night. At daybreak we entered the town, and immediately proceeded to a tavern where we got beds, and retired for a few hours to rest. Our passport was taken to the Director of Police to be inspected. At about nine he sent for us, asked us a few questions, and returned our passport properly endorsed and certified.

On the 31st of October, at ten, we took post for Trieste, and arrived on the 4th of November, at about eight o'clock, after a most tedious, harassing, and vexatious journey. The reader who traces the distance on the map or the *itinéraire*, and calculates the time of our going over the ground, will understand the vast difference, even at that time, between English travelling, and travelling on the Continent.

On the night after quitting Laibach we had a very high and precipitous mountain to ascend; and our horses being of the most sorry breed of cattle, I dismounted, and took a short cut up the mountain. At eleven at night I saw an immense bonfire at a distance from the road I was on. A number of people were collected round it. Not a house

was in view; the carriage was at least four miles below me; and as the road was a perfect zig-zag, the wild character of the mountain scenery made me hesitate to approach the spot. At last I got so near that I was discovered, and two men ran towards me. I had no right to expect courtesy, or decency, or even safety, in such a wilderness, and the fellows rudely asked me in German who and what I was. In broken German I told them that I did not understand what they said, and I asked if they spoke French. They answered "No." The whole scene was so awfully wild that it was worthy of the pencil of Salvator Rosa; and even his pencil could not have done justice to it. "Do you speak Italian?" said I, and a fierce "No" was my only satisfaction. At last I ejaculated, "Do you speak English?" and, to my utter astonishment, both vociferated the English "Yes," with the addition "perfectly well." I was thunderstruck at the reply; for who would have expected to find the English language on a bleak and barren mountain in this part of the world? I found that one of the men was a native Irishman, and that the other was a German that had been long in the British service. Our countryman, Paddy,—for my companions were also Irish,—informed me, with a revival of the brogue, which he had forgotten, or flattered himself that he had forgotten for many years, that the mountains were so infested with banditti, that he and his party were posted there to arrest depredators and protect travellers. I must confess that I thought that these robber-catchers had taken a rather odd method of pursuing their vocation; as their huge bonfire exposed their watch-station, and consequently enabled the banditti to avoid them, and perpetrate their crimes with impunity. Perhaps the Hibernian had en-

grafted on the Germans the genius (generally considered indigenous) of his country for such sort of mistakes. At length the carriage came up, and, jumping into it, I bade a long adieu to such strange mountaineer policemen, after giving them a trifle that we could but badly afford.

I need not dwell on the pleasure we felt this morning at beholding the gulf of Trieste, and the ships and vessels lying in the harbour, amongst which was a Russian squadron, consisting of four sail of the line, one frigate, and a store-ship. We also discovered a ship at anchor some leagues out, which, to our very great satisfaction, we were informed was his Britannic Majesty's frigate the *Unité*, Captain Campball, who, they said, blockaded that port. This was the most welcome news imaginable. We were now certain of being able to join our native flag; how did my heart pant to be afloat on the ocean, and under the English standard! Compared to that summit of liberty, even my present security and recent freedom of travelling seemed to me as slavery.

We waited on the Director of police, who received us with great politeness, and had us conducted to the first tavern in the town; requesting that we would still say we were Americans. A Borea, or N.E. wind, which in the Adriatic is most violent, was then setting in: he assured us it would be impossible to get embarked until the gale abated, but that he would render us every assistance in due time. There was a gentleman named Danolan (who had formerly been the English vice-consul) then in town. We waited on him, and he proved in every sense of the word a real friend; he engaged to get us embarked, supplied us with cash, and offered us to remain at his house if we wished: his wife was equally

polite and attentive. The inclemency of the weather was the only thing at this moment that prevented our happiness being complete.

We returned to the tavern, and passed our moments as comfortably as possible under existing circumstances; dined at the table d'hôte with the Russian officers of the squadron, who at first, I imagine, supposed that we actually were Americans, but afterwards, from a number of insinuations thrown out by them, and the marked attention they paid us, I became confident that they had discovered what we were.

Notwithstanding the severity of the weather, Hewson and myself ascended an adjacent height, when our breasts expanded and our minds glowed at the sight of the Adriatic. Our concealment in woods, and terrors at towns, our swampy beds, drenched backs, and starved stomachs, were most pleasurable reminiscences, when we felt that they had led us to the "high top gallant of our joy," and that we now saw our glorious element, with a little frigate under old England's flag, blockading the port, and keeping the whole line of coast in awe. The marine of this coast, I verily believe, thought that they might as easily fight the devil himself as attempt to compete with an English squadron.[1] Let us reflect upon this immense distance from the arsenals and resources of England, and

[1] In November 1808, the date of O'Brien's stay in Trieste, all the eastern shores of the Adriatic were French territory save the small strips of land about Trieste and Fiume, which were Austrian. Dalmatia and Istria, like the other old dominions of Venice, had been annexed to Napoleon's kingdom of Italy. In 1809 the Emperor appropriated Trieste and Fiume also, after his victory over Austria at Wagram. Thus O'Brien, a year later, would have found Trieste French.

then shall we see that never had a nation established such an irresistible superiority over all enemies, as England had consummated by her naval triumphs, and by her naval economy and management. Thrice happily did we hail our glorious country, as we saw her flag triumphant on the wave.

On Monday night, the 7th November, the weather became moderate, the English frigate got under weigh, and I feared that she might be quitting her station. So anxious was I to be once more on a quarter-deck, that it never occurred to me that the blockade could not be raised, and, that if she left, another must resume the station. We repaired to our friend Mr. Danolan, who assured us that he had provided all things for our departure; and, by his arrangement, by half-past eight we had embarked, and in a short time we were clear of the harbour. However, a few minutes before we embarked I put into the post-office a letter directed to my friends Tuthill and Ashworth, in the real German character, giving them a minute detail of the course we had taken, and all particulars relative to our successes, which they fortunately received, and which afterwards enabled them to escape.

We rowed towards the point where I had calculated we should find the English frigate; but, to our mortification, we were disappointed. When the moon was up we weighed, and stood out for her; but, to the grief of my heart, we could not fall in with her. I concealed all the tortures of my mind, lest I should afflict my comrades.

We kept rowing in different directions, on a sort of forlorn hope, until daybreak, when we observed a man-of-war's boat pulling right down for us. It ran alongside of

us, and asked in English what we were. I sprang up at hearing the English language, and, with inexpressible joy, saw that it was a British ship-of-war's boat. I answered that we were three British subjects who had escaped from a French prison. Having been informed that it was the *Amphion's* boat, I assured the officer we should be very happy to quit our present conveyance, and take a passage with him to the frigate. He replied, "The ship is at present at a considerable distance off; I shall not return until eight o'clock." I answered that that was of little consequence; two of us belonged to the navy, and we would willingly take a cruise along the coast with him, if he had no objection. "Very well," was his rejoinder. So we paid our boatmen, dismissed them, and had the happiness of being once more under our proper colours, and on our own element.

Upon turning round, and looking at the officer who commanded the boat, how excessive were my surprise and joy when I instantly recognised Lieutenant Jones, an old friend and shipmate of 1802. I immediately made myself known to him, and this excellent fellow exultingly expressed his gladness that he should have been the officer that had had the good fortune of picking us up.

I was astonished at finding that the *Amphion*, instead of the *Unité* frigate, was the ship lying at anchor off Trieste. Lieutenant Jones cleared the point up by stating that the *Amphion* had arrived only that night, and that his Majesty's ship *L'Unité* had weighed and stood lower down the gulf. Strange was it that my old ship and friend should arrive on the very night that the weather favoured our embarkation from Trieste.

This morning, November the 8th, 1808, I shall never

forget. We felt in perfect security, and were amusing ourselves by narrating anecdotes of our escape, recalling to mind the horrors of the "Mansion of Tears," and in indulging hopes in favour of our friends within its walls, when at eight o'clock our amusement was put an end to by the discovery of two strange sail under Capo d'Istria. We took them for enemy's merchant-vessels, stealing along shore. Lieutenant Jones made directly towards them. One we soon perceived was full of men, and was endeavouring to separate from the other, and to pull closer in shore. She had the appearance of a row-boat, whilst her companion was larger, and was rigged like a *trabaccolo*, or schooner, under Venetian colours. We concluded that the greater part of the crew had abandoned her, and were endeavouring to get on shore in the row-boat.

The disparity of force was immense, and every circumstance was against us; but, although we were only in a frigate's yawl (a very small boat comparatively), our gallant officer without hesitation resolved to board, and make a hand to hand affair of it. The odds were sadly against us. Who can conceive my pride and elation when I thus found myself participating in the glories of my profession, and reflected how short a time had elapsed since I had been either a prisoner in a dungeon, or a sort of Nebuchadnezzar wandering in the fields and forests. My good fortune was excessive, in being thus, as it were at a tangent, thrust into active service,—a ship's cutlass, a black musket, were good substitutes for my chains and padlock; and I acted a marine's part on this occasion.

We fired several shots to bring the enemy to, which the trabaccolo returned with compound interest, by letting

fly at us from a four or six pounder. Our gallant little band gave way, *i.e.* pulled towards the enemy. We could not perceive many men on her deck, but those that were there kept up a smart fire. At length we got alongside, in the right English style, when upwards of twenty men suddenly showed themselves, with an officer at their head, decorated with the Legion of Honour, at whom I discharged my musket, which I believe took fatal effect. But at the moment I received a musketoon ball in my right arm, that disabled it. They poured into us a volley from muskets, musketoons, blunderbusses, etc. Our bowman and another sailor fell dead; three other seamen dropt from their wounds, and Green Dick, the pilot, one of them, died the next day. Jones was also severely wounded. Our little party was thus sadly thinned. The other vessel, seeing how few were our numbers, and how much they had been decreased, made towards the trabaccolo with twenty-two men. We had no alternative, but were under the necessity of sheering off, and it was only to their dastardly conduct that we remained indebted for not being again made prisoners. The frigate was not then in sight, and the confused state of our little crew, two killed and five wounded, including our brave and gallant officer, would have rendered us no difficult conquest to so superior a force, had they but persevered in the attack. Our retreat was covered by the musket of only *one* marine, whose name was Hunt; I supplied him with cartridges as fast as he could load and fire, biting them off and giving them with my left hand to him. My friend, Barklimore, was of essential service to us, in binding up our wounds with handkerchiefs, etc., for there were not a sufficient number of *tourniquets*. My worthy

comrade, Hewson, also greatly distinguished himself as one of the boarders, and afterwards by tugging at the oar to facilitate our escape.

Lieutenant Jones never made the slightest complaint, nor did he let any one know that he was wounded, until we were well clear of the enemy, although it proved to be a most painful and dangerous wound which he had received; he had also several musket-balls through the crown of his hat. My wound, through the right arm, as I have observed, disabled it so that I never fully recovered the strength of it.[1]

At about half-past twelve, or noon, we got alongside my good old ship, towed by her launch, which they sent out on noticing from the mast-head our disabled state. We were hoisted on board in a chair, with the utmost care, the captain and officers evincing much anxiety towards us, and vieing with each other in offices of kindness. The other two worthy lieutenants of the *Amphion*, Messrs. Bennet and Phillott, had been on board of her in my time, and thus was I at home amongst old friends and shipmates. I had not been heard of for many years, and all that my brother-officers knew of me was, that I was a prisoner in a French gaol; judge, therefore, what was their astonishment, when in hoisting in the wounded they found a stranger, and recognised that stranger to be me. It seemed to them that I must have dropt from the clouds, for they could form no conjecture how I came amongst them.

[1] For this very serious wound, I have never received any pension, as it was not considered equivalent to the loss of a limb, when I was surveyed by order of the Lords of the Admiralty in May, 1817; and yet what is the difference between the loss of a limb, and the loss of the use of a limb?

Captain Hoste, though unknown to me, behaved like a parent, and his very great humanity will never be erased from my grateful recollection; although he confessed upon my first appearance, he was prejudiced against me, for he had imagined that I had been the chief of the vessel Mr. Jones had attacked, and who had done all the mischief to this officer and his crew. His clerk gave me up his cabin. Mr. Moffat, the surgeon, and his assistant, Mr. Angus, treated us with the greatest care and tenderness. The ball, it appeared, having divided the muscles, had completely laid bare the artery of my arm, grazing without lacerating it, but so much so, that both of the surgeons, in the first instance, were of opinion that amputation was unavoidable. My habits for a long time had been so abstemious that my system was free from any inflammatory tendency; and to this, I suppose, I may owe my recovering without suffering the loss of my limb. The whole of the officers were zealous in affording us every solace and succour that could be expected by people in our miserable condition, from their generous countrymen.

Sixteen days elapsed, through most of which I had been confined to my cot. My arm was getting better rapidly, and glad was I to be informed that Jones was as quickly recovering of his wound. I embraced an opportunity given me during this period of sixteen days, by a merchant from Trieste coming on board, to have a letter sent, agreeably to promise, to the commandant at Lindau, dated "on board H. M. frigate, *Amphion*, now blockading the port of Trieste," assuring him how happy I should be, if ever any opportunity presented itself, of my having it in my power to convince him that I entertained no

vindictive feeling for the unnecessary severity that I had received at his hand.

H.M. brig *Spider*, commanded by Lieutenant Sandford Oliver, now joined us from Malta, with orders. She was to return at once, and as I felt full of anxiety to join the commander-in-chief, off Toulon, or proceed to England, I got from the surgeon an assurance that there could be no danger in my being removed. Captain Hoste kindly yielded to my solicitations to be allowed to take a passage in the *Spider*, though he added, in the most friendly manner, that if I preferred it, I might remain with him, until he went down to Malta with a convoy which he shortly expected. Hewson and I expressed our fear of missing our promotion, having lost so many years in consequence of our captivity: he approved of our wishes, and gave us a letter of introduction and recommendation to Sir Alexander Ball, who was port-admiral and governor of Malta. We took a cordial leave of all our worthy friends in the *Amphion*, were conveyed to the *Spider*, and in a short time got under weigh, standing down the gulf.

Off Corfu I had the satisfaction of seeing the French flag struck, for the first time after a number of years: the *Spider* took a bombard (a vessel with a kind of cutter-rig), laden with wool and gregos (greatcoats). On the 8th of December we arrived at Malta, and in consequence of this capture were put into quarantine.

In the meantime, H.M. ship *Woolwich* was about to sail to England with a convoy. Admiral Ball had ordered Barklimore a passage in her; but she unfortunately got out to sea before we could procure him a conveyance. However, he was put on board a transport belonging to

the convoy, and arrived safe in England. H.M. ship *Proserpine* was the next day to proceed off Toulon, to Lord Collingwood; and had we not been in quarantine, it was the intention of Sir Alexander Ball to have sent us on board. The *Proserpine* was taken by the French; therefore we had to felicitate ourselves on our fifth escape from a French prison. We were ten days before we got out of quarantine; and on the same day the *Amphion* arrived. H.M. ship *Leonidas* was on the point of sailing to the fleet;[1] Sir Alexander Ball ordered us a passage, and everything was arranged for joining the commander-in-chief off Toulon with all possible expedition.

Prior to our going on board the *Leonidas*, we went off to take leave of our good friends on board the *Amphion*. Imagine what were our astonishment and joy when the first person we saw on arriving on her deck was the companion of our flight, our brother-sufferer Batley, whom, from his lameness and ill-health, we had been obliged to leave at the public-house in Baden. Happily for him, he was picked up off Trieste, and only a few days after we had sailed in the *Spider*. When our mutual congratulations were over, he briefly related to us the following particulars of his adventures and fate:—

"The people with whom you had left me in the small village behaved with great attention, as did likewise the old shoemaker. As soon as I was perfectly recovered, I quitted them and directed my course towards Austria; but on the second or third day I was arrested near Elsingen, in Wirtemberg, and thrown into prison, where I remained five weeks. They had written to inform the

[1] *I.e.* the Mediterranean squadron, then under Lord Collingwood, engaged in the blockade of Toulon.

French Government that they had me in custody; however, before an escort (which they expected) arrived from France, to conduct me back, I fortunately effected my escape by breaking out of my gaol."

I need not observe what sincere pleasure we felt at this recital of his success, or how extreme was our joy at thus falling in with our so long lost companion.

We were the first party that had succeeded in escaping from the dreadfully strong and well-guarded fortress of Bitche. All our friends of the *Amphion* were excessively delighted to see us, and Captain Hoste did everything in his power to forward our wishes.

We took an affectionate leave of them, and embarked on board the *Leonidas*. The wind, though not fair, was not a barrier to our departure, for she sailed like a witch; and in four days we arrived at Minorca. There we changed ships, and embarked on H.M. sloop *Kingfisher*, for a passage to Gibraltar, to which place it was calculated that Lord Collingwood had repaired, in his flag-ship the *Ocean*, having parted from the body of his fleet in a severe easterly gale.

We proceeded in the *Kingfisher* as low as Malaga, where we fell in with the *Weazle* brig, Captain Prescott, who informed us that, owing to a change of wind, Lord Collingwood had put his helm up for Malta, where he intended to repair the damages which he had sustained in the gale. We therefore returned to Minorca, received fresh despatches, and in five days arrived at Malta, and joined Lord Collingwood in the *Ocean*. We had, in a few days, the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing five more of our fellow-sufferers, all of whom had succeeded in escaping from Bitche, in consequence of the letter I had written

from Trieste, pointing out the course we had taken. Among these were my brothers in adversity, Tuthill and Brine. Ashworth had escaped, but had not yet arrived.[1] The French considered Bitche their stronghold for English prisoners, and greatly must they have been annoyed and mortified at so many having triumphed over their force, ingenuity, and vigilance.[2]

Lord Collingwood received us very kindly, and asked us several questions as to our proceedings and designs. He set us to do duty as midshipmen on board the *Ocean*, and left Malta for Palermo. We then fell in with the fleet off Minorca, and accompanied it to Toulon, which port we blockaded until the 28th of March, 1809. I frequently had the honour of dining with his lordship, who had the kindness to have me seated near him, and to assist me in carving, as my arm was so weak, and still in a sling. His lordship laughed heartily at my informing him that I had written to the commandant at Lindau agreeably to my promise.

At this time I was overwhelmed with melancholy, and even the joy of my escape seemed to desert me. I had lost five years of my life at its most valuable period, in French prisons, and the thought of bringing up so long

[1] It appeared that the brigadier of *gendarmes* had been invited by them to take a share of their dinner, on the very day that my letter had arrived. He handed Tuthill *this* letter, saying it was not an English but a German one, and, contrary to the usual custom, he did not break the seal or inspect it: of course, it was not perused until after dinner, and after he had departed.

[2] From Ashworth's narrative in the *Naval Chronicle*, vol. xxviii., it appears that he, with Tuthill, Brine, and two others escaped on 8th December, 1808, by means of a rope just similar to that which O'Brien had employed. They got safely off, and reached Trieste in February.

an arrear of time in the service was most disheartening. Had I not been captured I should, ere this, if I had lived, have been at least a lieutenant, if not a commander—trusting to opportunities to distinguish myself for further promotion. Now, at my age, I was only a midshipman.

These gloomy thoughts, however, were soon relieved, for Lord Collingwood appointed me the next day, the 29th, to a lieutenancy in a court-martial vacancy in the *Warrior*, Captain J. W. Spranger.

CHAPTER XVII

Receiving a lieutenancy—Lord Collingwood's kindness—Joining the *Warrior*—An unexpected supply of dollars—An accident at sea—Capture of Ischia and Procida—Expedition against the Ionian Isles—Joining the *Amphion*—Captain Hoste's activity in the Adriatic—Commodore Dubourdieu and his squadron at Ancona—Chasing the enemy—A wild-goose pursuit—Success at last—A glorious battle and a splendid victory—Details of the action of Lissa—My return to England—Interview with the First Lord of the Admiralty—A visit to Ireland—A solicitation from Captain Hoste to join the *Bacchante* as first lieutenant—Revisiting the Mediterranean—Provoking the enemy—They provoking us—A capture—Unhappy loss of prizes—An inexplicable accident—Extraordinary explosion of a French frigate—A flag of truce—Venice—Corfu—Capture of flotilla.

His lordship presented to me my lieutenancy in the handsomest manner possible. He paid me many compliments, and expressed his regret that this had been the first opportunity he had had of bestowing a commission in his own gift; adding that he cheerfully gave it to me as some reparation for my sufferings, and as a reward of my enterprise and fortitude. His lordship warmly expressed his approbation of my conduct during the time I had been under his immediate command; and rewards as well as praise were doubly valuable from a veteran officer, so highly and so justly celebrated for his nautical skill and consummate valour. His lordship cordially wished me

every possible success in the service; and to his order, to repair on board the *Warrior*, he jocosely added, "I suppose your luggage can be easily conveyed to your ship." To this supposition I as laconically replied that a stocking would be sufficient to contain everything I possessed.

But my gratitude to this great and good man, for his paternal kindness to me since I had been on board the *Ocean*, was so powerful as to overwhelm expression, and the recollections of all the friendly feelings that had been evinced towards me by Captain Thomas, and every officer of the ship, rushed upon my mind irresistibly; and it was not without great and many efforts that I prevented my feelings exhibiting themselves by what might have been called a weak and feminine, though a natural, ebullition of intense emotions. It was some time before I could command myself sufficiently to express to his lordship my deep and heartfelt sense of his kindness and patronage. A period of twenty-nine years has not diminished, in the slightest degree, the gratitude which had then nearly overpowered me.

I was taken on board the *Warrior* by one of her boats, under the command of Lieutenant David Dunn. No sooner was I seated in the boat, than the coxswain, touching his hat, informed me that a bag of dollars had been just handed in for my use. This was an act of timely and generous friendship, greatly enhanced by the delicacy with which it had been contrived. It immediately occurred to me from whom this good feeling and liberality had emanated. The Hon. William Waldegrave (now a post-captain) was then one of the lieutenants on board the *Ocean*. He had evinced a very friendly feeling towards me, and, previously to my leaving the ship, had

suggested to me the necessity of my being provided with a certain sum of money for the purpose of settling with my predecessor on taking his place, for what he may have paid in advance for table expenses and contingencies to the mess. I replied to Mr. Waldegrave that my friend Captain Hoste had had the extraordinary kindness to give me *carte blanche* permission to draw on his banker at Malta for any money I might stand in need of. But he had not been put off by my answer; on opening the bag I found myself supplied amply, or even profusely; and there was a friendly letter, in which he told me that when I should have a surplus of prize-money, I might pay his present advance to his banker. I need not say that I scrupulously, and with the greatest pleasure, fulfilled this duty.

Arrived on board the *Warrior*, I was introduced to Captain Spranger, who received me politely, and, at the same time, I was informed by the mate of the deck that it was now my watch. I was also introduced to my brother officers, all of whom appeared to be cordial and polite. Dinner was now announced, and after quickly despatching what there was, I sent for the ship's tailor to equip me for my new rank, by metamorphosing a midshipman's into a lieutenant's uniform; and, having borrowed a coat from Mr. Dunn for the interim, I ascended to the quarter-deck, and immediately received "the *Orders*," and took the command of the watch.

As Mr. Dunn was much taller and stouter than myself, I cut rather a ludicrous figure in his uniform, a figure not often seen on the quarter-deck of one of his Majesty's ships-of-war; but an officer in command of the watch, on board of a man-of-war, more especially when in a line of

battle, has his attention so entirely absorbed by things of importance that he has no time to reflect on his personal appearance, whether it be such as to gratify his pride, or to mortify his vanity.

The following morning, Captain Spranger appointed me the signal lieutenant, and this relieved me of all duty at night, except when signals were to be made.

In the afternoon of the ensuing day, 31st March, when our division of the fleet was in the act of wearing together by signal, the *Renown* and the *Warrior* ran foul of each other, which occasioned us so much damage that we began to leak a good deal. We, however, gained on the leak, and having made all possible despatch in refitting, accompanied Sir John Stuart in the expedition to the Bay of Naples, and were present and co-operated at the capture of the islands of Ischia and Procida. In the autumn we had the sole conducting of the expedition, under Brigadier-General Oswald, against the Ionian Islands, and succeeded in capturing Zante, Cephalonia, Ithaca, and Cerigo.

We next repaired to Malta to refit, and afterwards joined the fleet off Minorca. Our ship being found to be in a defective state, Lord Collingwood sent her for a short cruise off Cape San Sebastian, with orders then to repair to Malta, and take the April convoy to England.

On our arrival at Malta, I was overjoyed to find the *Amphion*. My old friend, Lieutenant Jones, came to inform me that my friend and old shipmate, Charles George Rodney Phillott, the first lieutenant, had been promoted for distinguished services, and, with his usual zeal and friendship, he expressed his hope that I might be appointed to fill his vacancy. After a communication

with Captain Spranger, I addressed myself to Captain Hoste, and notwithstanding the applications to him were so numerous, and so highly backed, I succeeded in my object, and on 2nd March, with a cheerful heart and full of hope, I joined the *Amphion*, and became the third or junior lieutenant. My friend Jones became the first, whilst Mr. William Slaughter, whom I succeeded, was now the second lieutenant.

As my desires were for the most active service, I was now in a fair way of having them fully gratified. On the 27th Captain Hoste resumed his station in the Adriatic. The enemy's naval force was now rapidly increasing in the ports both of Venice and Ancona, and it was evident that the French Emperor was about to make an effort, either to inflict some serious injury on our commerce, or to interrupt our naval superiority in the Adriatic. Our little squadron was in incessant activity; and although our force was trifling in comparison to that of the enemy, we trusted to our good fortune for falling in with it in detail, and visions of honour, glory, distinction, promotion, and all the results of conquest, continually filled our minds. I had individually an anxious wish for an opportunity of expressing to the French in the *warmest* manner how much I was obliged to them for their former favours. We used to heave-to, or stand close in shore off their ports, and under easy sail, and sometimes we would detain, board, and destroy their coasting vessels, and do everything in our power to exasperate them and induce them to come out.

On 29th September we discovered that the ships at Chiozza, near Venice, under Commodore Dubourdieu, had sailed; and Captain Hoste, in the *Amphion*, accompanied

by the *Active*, Captain J. A. Gordon, immediately pushed for Ancona. Here we found the enemy, consisting of three large frigates, two corvettes, two brigs, one schooner, and a gunboat. Some of them were under sail outside the port, whilst others within appeared to be getting under weigh. We concluded they would immediately give us chase, but in the evening, to our great vexation, they all returned into port. Our calculation was, that they would push for Corfu, get reinforced by any ships that might be off or at that island, and then proceed in all probability for Sicily.

The *Cerberus* and *Acorn* joined our little squadron; and on our again reconnoitring Ancona on 17th October, we found that all our birds had escaped. Instantly every stitch of canvas that could be of use was spread, and our course was for Corfu, with the intention of looking into Lissa, *en passant*. Our hope was, by superior sailing, to arrive first at Corfu, and prevent their entering without risking a battle.

We fell in with a Sicilian privateer, that informed us she had just been chased by the enemy, who were steering for Corfu. Our calculations were thus verified; every sail was crowded, and our hearts rebounded with the expectation that the dawn would present to us the enemy in the offing. The morning came, however, and in vain did our eyes traverse in all directions within the verge of the horizon. Not a foe was to be seen, and the glowing hopes of a battle vanished. We stood for Brindisi, across to Cattaro, on the Albanian coast, and ran down the whole Adriatic; but all was disappointment. Finally we bore up for the island of Lissa, where, on our arrival, we found, to our infinite mortification, that the enemy had

been before us, and had departed. In fact, the treacherous Sicilian had deceived us; and on the very day on which this ally had given us the false information, the French commodore, having learned from a fisherman that the English squadron was on a cruise, ran across to Port St. George; landed troops; committed great havoc and devastation; destroyed our prizes; took away three neutral ships that we had detained; and hurried back to Ancona. This was a bitter drug of disappointment; and none felt it more severely than our gallant captain. I dined with him that day, and saw the big drop trickle down his manly cheek. Never was there a more gloomy, melancholy dinner-party, or dinner-table, than this.

All sail was set, and we were following in the direction which the enemy had taken, or were said to have taken. At midnight of the ensuing day we had hazy weather with light winds and a heavy swell. In sweeping the horizon with an excellent night-glass, I imagined that some dark objects had obstructed my view on its edge. I had repeatedly ascertained this, and my observation was confirmed by the young gentleman of my watch, ere I took the resolution of acquainting my most gallant chief with the fact. I shall never forget the ecstasy with which he sprang from his cot, exclaiming emphatically, "We have them at last, thank God!—Thank you, O'Brien," said this brave enthusiast in his country's cause—"thank you for this good look-out; let the officers be called and all get quietly to their quarters; back your mizen top-sail, that Gordon (of the *Active*, the next ship in line) may get near enough to communicate without noise, and I shall be on deck in a moment."

All these judicious orders were as rapidly executed as

they had been given, and Captain Gordon received our joyful intelligence, and as duly conveyed it to the next in succession in the line. Every heart was full of unrestrainable joy at the approaching conflict; and proud was I at having been the officer who had discovered the enemy. Daylight came, and what was my mortification, what were the chagrin and disappointment of us all, when the enemy's fleet turned out to be not exactly "*des châteaux d'Espagne*," but a reality, though nothing more than paltry fishermen! We reached Ancona and found the fugitives safe in the harbour. The *Moniteur*, in noticing this wild-goose chase, had the impudence to state "that the English squadron, though superior to the French in *force* and *numbers*, had most sedulously avoided measuring strength with it."[1]

The *Cerberus* left us for Malta to refit, but we were joined by the *Volage*, of twenty-two guns, and the *Alacrity* brig, of eighteen. Daily did we capture coasting vessels and insult the enemy's coasts. The *Volage*, on the night of 27th November, in hazy weather, owing to a sudden shift of wind, ran foul of the *Amphion;* and both ships were obliged to leave the squadron. In Malta, whilst under repairs, I had the satisfaction of seeing my brave friends, Lieutenants Jones and Slaughter, advanced to the rank of commander in reward of their gallant services. My now becoming first lieutenant of the *Amphion*, my commander and they were pleased to call my birthright; but Lord Collingwood was dead, and Sir Charles Cotton the new commander-in-chief, a stranger to me, without consulting with Captain Hoste, placed my friend Lieutenant Dunn over my head, who was only eight months my senior.

[1] The reader will find in vol. v. of James's *Naval History* many similar extracts from this same source.

On 26th February, 1811, both ships being ready for sea, we sailed for the Adriatic, and on 12th March arrived on our old cruising ground off the island of Lissa, where we found the *Active* and *Cerberus*—the *Acorn* sloop being on detached service. Our squadron consequently consisted of four ships, and all were now most anxious to reconnoitre the Ancona heroes, who had, with such consummate effrontery, stated that the Adriatic had been by them scoured of British intruders.

Their politeness, it would appear, anticipated our wishes, and surpassed our expectation, by inducing them to make the *amende honorable* for former conduct in paying us a visit before dawn of the next morning, Wednesday, 13th March, a day for ever memorable, at least with me, and all who shared its glories, and, I might add, not to be forgotten in Britain's naval annals.

The *Active* being well to windward, on the look-out, Gordon descried a squadron of ships-of-war lying-to; he instantly made the night-signal for an enemy, and bore up to join us. At daylight our joy was indescribable—they were not much more than a mile off Port St. George. The force of our long-sought enemy, whom we immediately recognised, was ascertained to be, six ships, a brig, a schooner, xebec, and two gunboats; certainly a very superior number—the disparity, to all appearance, overwhelming; but, strange to say, there was not a soul in the *Amphion*, from the chief down, who did not anticipate a complete victory; and I have been informed since that the same feeling prevailed throughout the other ships.

All sail was made close-hauled, tacking occasionally to meet this Franco-Venetian squadron, under the same chief,

Dubourdieu, who, at about six o'clock, was bearing down in two divisions to attack us. He, leading the starboard or weather-one, in the *Favorite*, a large frigate, followed by the *Flore*, *Bellona*, and *Mercurio* brig; the lee division was led by the *Danaë*, followed by the *Corona*, *Carolina*, and small craft.[1]

Our ships were in a very compact line ahead, the *Amphion*, *Active*, *Cerberus*, and *Volage*, having every sail still set, that we might close as soon as possible. When nearly within gun-shot, Captain Hoste telegraphed "Remember Nelson!" which was answered by three loud cheers from the crews of our squadron, who manned the rigging on the occasion.

At nine, now reduced to top and top-gallant sails, on the starboard tack, in such close order as to make it impossible for any vessel to pass between, decorated with union-jacks and ensigns at the different mast-heads and

[1] In order to realise the disparity of force, it is only necessary to give the list of the two squadrons—

FRANCO-ITALIAN.

[The first three ships were of the French, the others of the Italian navy.]

Favorite	40 guns	Commodore B. Dubourdieu.
Flore	40 ,,	Captain J. Alexandre Péridier.
Danaë	40 ,,	? ? ? ?
Corona	40 ,,	Captain Paschaligo.
Bellona	32 ,,	Captain Duodo.
Carolina	32 ,,	Captain Palicuccia.

With the *Mercurio* brig (16 guns), a 10-gun schooner, a 6-gun xebek, and two gunboats.

BRITISH.

Amphion	32 guns	Commodore William Hoste.
Active	38 ,,	Captain J. A. Gordon.
Cerberus	32 ,,	Captain Henry Whitley.
Volage	22 ,,	Captain Phipps Hornby.

Excluding the small vessels the enemy had 224 guns, the British 124!

stays, independent of the regular red ensigns at the mizen peaks, we hoisted a commodore's pendant at the *Amphion's* main, at the going up of which our gallant commander cried out most emphatically, "There goes the pride of my heart!"

Every preparation made, there was a pause or a profound silence throughout the ship, both squadrons approaching fast, when Captain Hoste called to me to "try a single shot from one of the main-deck guns at Dubourdieu's ship." This done, it fell immediately under her bows, which convinced us that we should hit her with guns double-shotted in a very few minutes.

In that time a most tremendous fire was opened, and became general on both sides: ours was so well directed, and our ships so close in line, that the French commodore, who evinced great gallantry, was completely foiled in the attempt to board us on the starboard quarter. This sealed his destruction; for at the moment that his jib-boom had nearly plombed our taffrail, his bowsprit and forecastle being crowded with boarders, himself in full uniform amongst the foremost, displaying great intrepidity, and animating his men, a brass five-and-a-half inch howitzer, which had been previously loaded with between seven and eight hundred musket-balls, and well pointed, was discharged right at them. The carnage occasioned by this, together with an incessant fire of small arms from the marines and seamen, as well as round, grape, and canister, from every great gun that could be brought to bear, was truly dreadful. Numbers of the poor wretches were swept away; and amongst the fallen was distinctly observed their gallant leader.

The *Favorite's* fire now became irregular and languid,

and she appeared unmanageable. Our squadron being already too near the shore, it was deemed indispensable to get their heads off to sea; and therefore the signal was made to wear together. Our opponent, attempting the same evolution, failed, and, in great confusion, went plump on Lissa rocks. We had also, in the *Amphion*, a narrow escape from sharing the same fate; and for our safety we were, under Providence, mainly indebted to the extraordinary efforts and presence of mind of William Thomas, captain of the fore-top, stationed there, who, at the critical moment of wearing (the rocks not half pistol-shot distant under our lee), perceiving the jib-stay and halliards shot away, the halliards unrove from the mast-head block, and consequently the sail rendered useless, on which the performance of this evolution principally depended, caught the end of the halliards on its way down, and, with the swiftness of a hind, and the agility of a monkey, was at the mast-head block, through which they were instantly rove, and carried down by him with the utmost rapidity, by the top-mast stay to the bow-sprit end, where, in a twinkling, they were again bent, and the jib set flying, to the admiration of all who witnessed this intrepid, "indeed, almost superhuman" exploit, as it was since termed by Captain Sir David Dunn, who was then first lieutenant, and an eye-witness of the affair.[1] The ship happily, I might have said miraculously, wore clear of the danger, and renewed the action on the larboard tack.

The *Volage*, previously the rear-ship, of course now led on the larboard tack, and gallantly did she perform her part.

[1] This twenty-line sentence deserves note as being perhaps the longest in modern English literature.

The *Flore* now evinced a determination to execute, by boarding the *Amphion*, the intention of her fallen chief; and certainly made a most gallant attempt, but was frustrated.[1] However, she succeeded in passing under the stern, and poured in a raking fire, which would have proved most destructive to the men on the main-deck, had I not ordered them to lie down between the guns, as by standing they were uselessly exposed, it being impossible to bring a gun to bear on the enemy at the moment. Many of the *Flore's* shot rattled along the decks without doing injury to the men thus protected by lying close between the guns, one of which had its pomillion knocked off.

The *Flore*, now to leeward on the same tack, hauled up on our lee-quarter; the *Bellona* did the same on the weather-quarter; so that we were warmly handled between them.

The lee-division of the enemy at this time was also on the larboard tack, and the captain of the *Danaë*, carefully avoiding the larger frigates, stuck close to the *Volage*, who plied him so well from her thirty-two pound carronades, that he was obliged to haul off to a more respectful distance; this manœuvre compelled the *Volage* to increase the quantity of powder, in the hope of reaching her wily antagonist, to whom, unfortunately, the effort proved favourable.

[1] In justice to an intrepid Gallic son of Neptune, who called forth general admiration, I must say that at the moment the *Flore* made the effort to board the *Amphion*, a seaman appeared standing on her fore yard-arm, holding a fire-grapnel ready to hurl upon our decks; nor did he quit his perilous position until dislodged by our musketry, after several balls had struck the grapnel, when he flung it, but, being too far off, without effect, and, hastening to the opposite yard-arm, jumped overboard. The ultimate fate of this heroic fellow we could never learn, but I fear he must have perished.

The breechings having given way in consequence of the increased charges, the carronades were upset, leaving the gallant Hornby but one six-pounder to keep up the unequal contest. The *Volage* was nearly cut to pieces, when the *Active* came opportunely to her relief; at sight of which, the *Danaë* made all sail to escape to Lessina, as did the *Carolina*, and the small craft scampered off in various directions.

The *Corona* having all this time been warmly engaged by the *Cerberus*, now attempted to follow the *Danaë's* example, but was pursued and brought to close action in a superior style by the *Active*.

In the meantime we suffered much in the *Amphion* from the well-directed fire of the two ships, *Flore* and *Bellona*, so judiciously placed on our quarters; but the former, being the most formidable, demanded our chief attention; and being to leeward, we were enabled, by bearing up, to close and pass ahead so as nearly to touch her, when we poured our starboard broadside into her larboard bow. In consequence she soon ceased firing and struck her colours.

The *Bellona* was now attended to with marked and double diligence, we at the same time keeping a few main-deck guns pointed at the *Flore*, fearing she might play us a trick, and take advantage of our disabled state by slipping away; this was scarcely done, when I received a message from the captain by his *aide-de-camp*, Mr. Cornwallis Paley, to the above effect; and I had great pleasure, in reply, to say that I had anticipated the wishes of my chief, having had some slight knowledge of the character of those with whom we had now to deal. I confess I had a presentiment respecting this ship, which proved but too well-founded.

The *Bellona* soon followed the *Flore's* example; at forty-five minutes past eleven she struck her colours. The *Mercurio* brig fired occasionally until the *Favorite* had gone on the rocks near to which she had dropt anchor, and was busily employed with her boats in saving a part of the crew from the wreck. I fancied the *Flore* was increasing her distance to leeward, and apprehended she intended to copy the *Danaë* and *Carolina*, and try to get into Lessina, a French port on the Dalmatian coast, when I was delighted by a message that Captain Hoste wanted me immediately to take possession of the captured frigate; the first lieutenant, Dunn, having been incapacitated, from being severely burnt by an explosion on the quarter-deck, which also wounded our gallant chief, his brother, Thomas Edward Hoste, midshipman, and many others.

On this occasion, Captain Hoste evinced the greatest possible coolness and magnanimity. Lieutenant Dunn had been completely blown off his legs, and not a particle of skin left on his face, and therefore he might have been considered *hors de combat* for the present; but this brave officer still remained at his post, showing with his leader a brilliant example, as did Lieutenant Thomas Moore of the marines, who had been badly wounded, and was with difficulty persuaded to go to the surgeon to be dressed, after which he returned to his quarters.

The question now was, how to proceed on board the prize; for our ship was in almost a dismantled state, all yards and other tackles being shot to pieces, and the boats in a most shattered state; one, however, appearing not quite so bad as the rest, was carried bodily to the gangway, and tossed into the sea with a rope fast to her, by which, though half full of water, she was hauled to the

ship's side. I immediately got into her with Mr. Kempthorn, midshipman, and four seamen, all of whom commenced baling with their hats, etc., except one man at each side, who managed to paddle.

The *Flore* still increasing her distance, I requested that we might be permitted to try and reach her; but our gallant chief, from the dangerous state of our boat, and not for a moment imagining the beaten foe could act so dishonourably, after being under our guns so many hours, directed me to proceed to the nearest, the *Bellona*, on board of which with difficulty we got about noon.

Taking two of the boat's crew, I was received on the gangway by her first lieutenant and surviving officers—the captain (Duodo) excepted, who, they informed me, was then in his cabin mortally wounded. Perceiving them all with side-arms, I requested to know if their ship had surrendered. They replied in the affirmative; to which I observed, that on such an occasion, it was usual that swords should be delivered to the officer taking possession; with which they instantly and willingly complied. I now added, the form being gone through, that they were welcome to their arms, and presented his sword to each individual, all of whom declined the favour. These trophies were, therefore, handed into the boat, where I wished the late possessors also to place themselves, that they might pay the British commodore a visit: she being, from baling and stuffing the leaks, in rather a better state than when I quitted her. To comply with this proposal they seemed very reluctant, and expressed astonishment at my having risked the lives of myself and crew in such a conveyance; but when I assured them that if the *Bellona* possessed a better, they were welcome to take it, all

appeared enchanted and most thankful for this act of kindness, and the first lieutenant directed the stern-boat to be lowered; but, to their great dismay, she was, if possible, in a worse state than our own. Having a light favourable breeze, we trimmed the sails as well as we could, and closed with the *Amphion*, by which our distance was shortened nearly one-half; and I succeeded in persuading them to depart, and had the pleasure of seeing all ascend the *Amphion's* side.

I had the mortification to discover, at the same time, the *Flore* out of gun-shot distance, trimming her sails and making off towards Lessina. Anxious now to put the *Bellona* to rights, and ascertain her actual condition, more especially with regard to the magazine, etc., I interrogated the gunner, who stated that Captain Duodo had given him orders to place secretly in the cable tier some barrels of gunpowder, to which was attached a train, intending, he supposed, in the event of being compelled to surrender, that the ship, if not altogether destroyed, should be rendered useless to the captors—his being taken off the deck wounded prevented this catastrophe. I was forthwith conducted to the spot, and there placed one of the *Amphion's* men as a sentinel, giving him the necessary instructions, while I left the other at the helm.

I next proceeded to the cabin of the unfortunate captain, whom I found stretched on his back, in the most deplorable state: his wound, a most severe one in the abdomen, having become exceedingly offensive. By my visit, he appeared much affected, and pressed my hand between both of his and wept, expressing his gratitude in the most impressive manner for the kindness I had shown to a vanquished enemy. I begged he would command my

services in any way they could be beneficial to him, and bade him adieu.

It would be difficult to describe the horrors which now presented themselves. The carnage was dreadful—the dead and dying lying about in every direction; the cries of the latter were most lamentable and piercing. The surgeon, a herculean man, with an apron and his shirt-sleeves tucked up, attended by his assistant and others, bore a conspicuous part in the tragedy, being busily employed in examining wounds, ascertaining the bodies from whom the vital spark had actually fled, and superintending their interment, or rather launching out of the ports!

Strange to say, every man stationed at one of the guns had been killed, and as it was supposed by the same shots,[1] which passed through both sides of the ship into the sea. At another gun the skull of one poor creature was actually lodged in the beam above where he stood, the shot having taken an oblique direction: in short, the scene was heart-rending and sickening.

The prisoners assembled on the quarter-deck, and among them were a number of soldiers seated on their knapsacks, apparently in expectation of following their officers on board the British commodore. I addressed them, and assured them they should be treated with kindness, but that, in the first instance, each must return immediately to his station and assist with a good will in putting the ship in an efficient state to encounter the Borea, or north-east gale, with the approach of which we were now threatened; and I added that I was aware they must be to a certain degree in want of food and exhausted,

[1] The guns being double-shotted.

but the work must be first done, and after that they should have double allowance. To my proposal they assented; and to work they went most cheerfully, some shaking and kissing my hands, declaring they would most willingly obey my orders.

Two seamen now came forward, and in broken English made themselves known to be Portuguese—one a quartermaster and the other a mizen-top man. I expressed regret and astonishment at finding the subjects of our friend and ally, their king, in an enemy's ship, but that it would now be in their power to redeem, by good conduct, their character, in which case I should intercede for them with the commodore, and hoped they would be permitted to enter his Britannic Majesty's service, when they would be considered as Englishmen. They appeared much pleased with this intelligence, and promised faithfully to do all in their power to merit approbation, which promise they most scrupulously performed.

The seaman at the helm was now relieved by the Portuguese quartermaster, and I felt myself strong in having four men upon whom I could place some dependence.

In a short time we found ourselves in a somewhat better condition: the dead nearly all thrown overboard, with some who were not quite lifeless, but of whom not the slightest hope of recovery could be entertained, as the surgeon and his assistant repeatedly assured me. The sprung and shattered spars from aloft were sent down; the sails, which stood in need thereof, unbent and replaced; and the decks shovelled and cleared from the heaps of gore and *ordure* with which they had been encumbered.

The *Favorite* appeared at this time in one perfect

blaze on the rocks. The action was still kept up with great animation between the *Active* and *Corona*, when, at about half-past two, after a most obstinate resistance, to the honour of her captain, Paschaligo (who was a descendant of one of the most celebrated of the Doges), as well as of her gallant captors, the latter was subdued.

The *Amphion* and *Volage* were in a most helpless state; the hull of the *Cerberus* was a perfect riddle, though less damaged in masts, spars, and rigging than her consorts. At about four o'clock the *Favorite* blew up; the explosion caused a terrible shock, which was felt by the whole squadron; and we, on board the *Bellona*, were most thankful for our having so providentially escaped the same fate, by Captain Duodo being wounded.

At about nine P.M. the *Corona* was in imminent danger, having caught fire in the maintop, when in tow by the *Active;* she was, of course, instantly cut adrift. At about ten the flames, to us, appeared terrific, particularly on the main-mast and rigging, being then at point-blank distance on her lee beam. I used every effort, and succeeded in getting out of the reach of her heavy metal. At midnight we had the satisfaction of seeing the fire quite extinguished. This had been effected through the extraordinary activity and exertions of Lieutenant James Dickenson of the *Cerberus*, and George Haye of the *Active*, who had led their men, and, rushing through the devouring element in the most heroic manner, cut away the loose spars, rigging, etc. So particular a service could not be performed without detriment to those employed; some lives were lost, and Lieutenant Haye, whose gallantry had been on various previous occasions conspicuous, had been, with many other brave fellows, severely burnt.

Happily, the British squadron, with the *Bellona* and *Corona* prizes, were snugly moored in Port St. George, before the expected north-east gale, which did not set in until the 15th, and we were all busily employed plugging shot-holes, and repairing all defects, preparatory to our proceeding to Malta.

I took the first opportunity of visiting my gallant and worthy chief, whom, with my friend Dunn and many others, I found in a dismal state from their wounds, now become painful in the extreme. He expressed great satisfaction at seeing me, and complimented me on the *Bellona* being the first ship in getting into the harbour, and upon my managing the prisoners so well. He allowed the two Portuguese seamen to enter his Majesty's service, and ordered me a few more of the *Amphion's* crew, with two or three marines.

He appeared greatly annoyed by the perfidy of the captured frigate *Flore*, and was preparing a letter[1] to the senior officer of the fugitives, demanding her to be given up, according to the laws of war and honour. We, as soon as possible, carefully got the wounded Captain Duodo on shore, to the comfortable residence of a dignitary of the church (a *canonico*), where he shortly expired.

The surgeon of the *Bellona* being the senior, and considered clever, Captain Hoste directed all the wounded prisoners to be placed under his superintendence, amongst whom was a Frenchman of the *Favorite*, whose right leg

[1] This letter Captain Hoste afterwards forwarded, under a flag of truce, to the captain of the *Flore*, to which an answer was written by the captain of the *Danaë*, stating the inability of M. Péridier to reply on account of his wound, and denying that the *Flore* had struck; but the *Danaë's* captain, as if ashamed of his name, sent his letter without a signature.

was so badly shattered that amputation was instantly necessary. Anxious to learn this poor fellow's history, I visited him in the cockpit, where I found him extended on the platform, the operation having been performed. His spirits were high.

He assured me he had no recollection of a single circumstance after his ship had been set fire to; he, with many of his wounded companions, were then prostrate on the decks; all who were capable of moving had of course quitted the ship. He must have been blown to the shore when the ship exploded; and he supposed his unfortunate fellow-sufferers had fallen into the sea. "Our ship's fate," he observed, "was quick and extraordinary. *La moitié a sauté dans l'air, l'autre a coulé à fond*"; and, he added, "I am your prisoner, and have lost my leg; but, my good officer, I have an excellent appetite, and a good meal would make me quite happy." I need not say that this brave Frenchman was taken especial care of, until he was sent on the 20th, with all the wounded, to Lessina.

Two hundred of the *Favorite's* crew, who had escaped on shore, were compelled to surrender their arms on Sunday, by the enterprising conduct of Mr. James Lew and Mr. Robert Kingston, midshipmen of the *Active*, left in charge of prizes at Lissa, who placed themselves at the head of a few privateer's men whom they persuaded to volunteer on the occasion.

The squadron and prizes being in a tolerable state for encountering the perils of the sea, on the 25th we quitted Port St. George to proceed to Malta; and off the harbour Captain Hoste communicated with the *Magnificent* (seventy-four) and *Éclair* (brig), which were watching the enemy.

On Thursday, 28th March, when off Cape Colonna, on the Calabrian coast, a heavy gale of wind came on, which made the *Bellona* labour exceedingly, rolling her lower yards nearly in the water, and the whole squadron strain very much. We found the pumps choked, and the leaks gaining rapidly; but, however, we cleared all away round the pump-well, and commenced baling with buckets, at which the prisoners were most active, and actually volunteered their services to fight the guns, in the event of falling in with an enemy. This favour, I assured them, I could not accept, as, should we unfortunately be recaptured, they would every one be put to death. The fact was, they were triple our number, and I allowed them to remain in their beds during the night, and had sentinels placed over the hatchways, without their suspecting it, to prevent many coming up at a time on any pretence whatever. The pumps at length were cleared and got to work, the gale abated, and all was once more in ship-shape order.

On Sunday, the 31st, we arrived in the harbour of Valetta, in Malta. The joy and enthusiasm with which we were received were most gratifying to the feelings of the whole squadron. The lines were manned spontaneously by the entire garrison; nor do I suppose an individual remained in any of the houses who could by any means move out, or mount to their flat roofs, which appeared crowded to excess, whilst a continued hurrah and *vivas* were kept up from the time we entered the harbour until the ships were anchored and sails furled.

Fêtes, balls, and every kind of homage and attention were paid by the different families and individuals, of every class, in the garrison, to the victors; and the

gallant prisoner, Captain Paschaligo, shared in every honour shown them, for which he appeared truly grateful. The *Amphion* and *Volage* were so much cut up, that to place them in a state to reach England with the prizes was as much as was possible to be hoped for or attempted.

On the 26th of April I had much pleasure in reading to our little crew of the *Bellona* a complimentary letter, for their gallant conduct on the 13th ult., from the commander-in-chief, Sir Charles Cotton, which they received with reiterated cheers.

Lieutenant Dunn, now nearly recovered, was directed to take charge of the larger prize frigate, the *Corona*, and Lieutenant James Dickenson, of the *Cerberus*, superseded me in the *Bellona*, when I returned to the *Amphion*, and became now, *de facto*, what I had some right to consider myself, *de jure*, first lieutenant, for my friend had had the situation but a few weeks. However, in that time he was made commander, and left me in the background.

On the 2nd of June the *Amphion* sailed from the hospitable Isle of Malta, the *Volage* and prizes in company; and, having a propitious passage, arrived safely in Old England, passing through the Needles. When off Portsmouth we received instructions to proceed to Deptford with our prizes, and I had the pleasure of being introduced to the Rev. Dixon Hoste, the father of my worthy captain. On the 12th of August the *Amphion* was put out of commission, and the crew had leave to visit their friends in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Even now, I could not divest myself of the strong feeling which predominated in my breast, that, as I had so just a claim to promotion, it would eventually take

place. I took the earliest opportunity of waiting upon Mr. Charles Yorke, who was then First Lord of the Admiralty. He received me in that courteous manner, and conversed with me with that candour, which had justly made him popular in the service. I fully stated the extreme hardship of my case, in having lost the absolute certainty of promotion by an officer being put over me who was only of my standing. Mr. Yorke entered into my views and feelings, and assured me that I should be appointed the first lieutenant to Captain Hoste, in his next command. He then gave me leave to visit my friends in Ireland, whom I had left at an early age, and from whom I had been separated for sixteen years. To those who have visited their dearest relations, and the spot of their nativity and boyhood, after a long separation, and as long a period of affliction, I need not describe the joys I felt at the prospect of again seeing and embracing all that were dear to me; but, at the point of departure, I, to my great grief and dismay, received an appointment to join, as second lieutenant, the *Volage*, then fitting for the East India station.

I repaired to the Admiralty, and met Mr. Edgecombe, the private secretary to the first lord, in the hall, just leaving his office. He expressed astonishment at this occurrence, took my letter, and the next day it was cancelled, and I obtained official leave to visit my native country. My companion on this happy journey was my fellow-sufferer in my escape from Bitche, Barklimore.

Whilst enjoying the full tide of the greatest of all blessings—the affectionate welcome and caresses of the dearest friends and relations—I received from Captain Hoste the news that he was to have the command of the

Bacchante, then on the stocks at Deptford, and that I was to be his first lieutenant.

On 16th November 1811, I was on board of the *Bacchante* when she was launched; and, amidst a joyous and brilliant assembly, she glided into the element upon which she was destined to render services to her country, and achieve glory for all on board.

We were joined by about twenty of the *Amphion's* crew, and almost all our former midshipmen, viz. Messrs. Farewell, Few, Hoste, Langton, Paley, Rees, and Waldegrave, whose leave of absence had expired. How beautifully is this fidelity and attachment of seamen to officers and ship contrasted to impressment and the various annoyances that engender an inclination in them to desert.

On our way to our station in the Mediterranean we had to take out the Duke del Infantado, who was then one of the most important political personages of Spain. We were ordered to land him at Cadiz.

On the morning of 13th March, the old *Amphions* came to me on the quarter-deck, and requested twenty-four hours' leave of absence, that they might dine on shore at Portsmouth, and celebrate the first anniversary of our glorious triumph off Lissa. James Bealy, quartermaster, was spokesman, and presented a code of regulations, and a bill of fare for dinner, with copies of two songs composed by himself and a seaman of the *Volage*, to be sung on this joyous occasion.[1] All returned to their exact time.

It was not till the 3rd of June that we sailed from Spithead, and on the 13th we landed the Duke del

[1] See Appendix, No. II.

Infantado, with his numerous suite, at Cadiz, whence he sent a present of 300 dollars to our petty officers and ship's company. This gift I returned in a courteous manner, expressing my thanks, but intimating that English ships-of-war never accepted of such presents. I need not say that my conduct received the approbation of Captain Hoste.

On our way to Malta, first communicating with the commander-in-chief, Sir Edward Pellew, off Toulon, we recaptured a Liverpool trader, that had just been taken by a Franco-Neapolitan privateer, *La Victoire*, which, after a long chase, we captured also.

On 19th August we appeared off Ancona, and did all in our power to provoke the *Uranie*, a French frigate of forty-four guns, with fourteen gunboats, to chase us. Our provocations were retaliated, for the enemy did not weigh an anchor.

We next proceeded off Trieste, when we discovered the *Danaë*, of unenviable celebrity (on the 13th of March, off Lissa), lying securely under the batteries, flanked by a formidable galley mounting several guns, and full of men; and though we captured and destroyed many small vessels in their presence, their gallant protectors never moved from their position.

On the 31st, being off Rovigno, on the Istrian coast, information was received that several vessels laden with ship timber for the Venetian Government were lying at the small port of Lema. The boats, five in number, two of which were small or gigs, had been in readiness early in the evening, with the command of which I had been honoured by Captain Hoste, who left me, as he was accustomed, discretionary power to proceed and cut them out if possible.

The port at which they lay was about eight miles up a river, the entrance of which was eight or ten miles from Rovigno. When about two miles up the river, though it was by no means a clear night, we discovered two merchant-vessels hauled in close under the cliff, which was chalky and high; on taking possession of them they proved to be laden with wine: the masters had their wives and families on board; they informed us that there were several vessels taking in ship timber under the protection of an armed xebec and two gunboats, about seven miles higher up.

I anchored the prizes in the centre of the river: in the charge of them I left Mr. Langton, a steady young man, and a few hands, to be in readiness to join us on our return, taking with me in my boat the masters, who were extremely reluctant to become my pilots and companions, asserting that the force which we possessed was by no means equal to the attack, and that we would eventually be captured and they of course shot on the spot.

By a little persuasion, however, and assuring them they were in no danger, they became more tranquil and reconciled. We now advanced most cautiously in a line ahead; oars were muffled, and the most profound silence observed. A gentle fair breeze enabled us to use our sails, though we could not help reflecting that on coming back it would be right against us.

When informed that we were within a mile of the enemy, we lowered our sails and made all snug for boarding, having reduced our propelling force to two oars of a side, but all the rest were out and ready in the rullocks. When we were within two or three cables' length, only

Cutting out the Enemy's Vessels of War in the Port of Lema, in Dalmatia.

London, Edward Arnold, 1902

one oar of a side was used, and each dropped softly into the water, whilst I assigned to every boat her opponent, agreeably to the manner in which the pilots had described the enemy's positions, reserving to myself the largest, the xebec, which lay farthest up, and the attack of which was to be the general signal for boarding, although no enemy was as yet perceptible.

Continuing thus slowly and cautiously, yet no enemy appearing, I almost apprehended that a hoax had been played off by these men, but they declared that they would willingly forfeit their existence if the information they had given was not correct, and at that instant laid themselves flat in the bottom of the boat, when by a stentorian voice, I was hailed in English, in the most insulting language, "Come alongside, you English b——s." I thanked them for the invitation, and, giving way with all our might, assured them we should be instantly with them. We were, under a discharge of grape from our twelve-pound carronade and a volley of musketry, on the decks of the xebec in a twinkling!

Her guns were primed and matches in hand, some of which were picked up in a lighted state; but the crew, from the rapidity of our movements, appeared paralysed, and the *maître d'équipage*, who had been, we were told, in the English service, and by whom we were defied, with many others, jumped overboard.

In the conflict the captain had been wounded in his cabin and made his escape by the rudder-chains. Report said that this unfortunate man, though very near the shore, never reached it.

The general attack was simultaneous, as previously concerted, and it proved successful; but from the smart

fire which was kept up on both sides by the other parties, I dreaded serious consequences.

Lieutenant Gostling, with Mr. Hoste, had most gallantly boarded and carried one gunboat; while Mr. Few, midshipman, in the most intrepid and determined style, in his gig, sword in hand, carried the other.

The merchant vessels were found by Mr. Powell, with sails unbent and fast to the shore by their sterns. On receiving this intelligence, I left Mr. Haig in command of the xebec, who conducted her down the river in a superior manner, and proceeded to Mr. Powell's assistance. In a short time we succeeded in getting the merchant vessels cut adrift, and in tow of our boats, obliging their own crews (whom we found concealed below) to get their sails up and bend them; during which time the vessels were drifting down the river, and the breeze was most providentially veering round fair.

It was past midnight, and by the light of the moon just appearing above the horizon, we could discern that not a vessel was left in the port; and, to complete our joy, upon inquiry, not a man was even wounded.

Notwithstanding that there were bodies of troops in the neighbourhood who, as the beating of their drums convinced us, were hastening to intercept our getting down the river, which was not more than musket-shot distance across, we escaped with all our prizes, and were joined by one more, a wine vessel, which came out of a little creek at the entrance of the river, mistaking us for friends on seeing the French colours, but not perceiving the union-jack over them. Captain Hoste was overjoyed at our success, and at seeing his gallant young brother in command of one of the gunboats.

I represented to him the services that had been rendered to us by the masters of the wine vessels, as well as the mistake made by the last poor fellow, whose whole property consisted of the little vessel and cargo, which he had laboured so hard in the morning to place under my protection. Captain Hoste, with his usual kindness of heart, readily assented to my wishes, and the three vessels with their crews were liberated.

The xebec was equipped immediately, and placed under the command of Mr. Powell, who greatly distinguished himself in her against the enemy. We took our prizes to Lissa, and on 16th September sailed to join the blockading squadron off Venice.

The wind being foul, we stretched over to the coast of Apulia, and at daybreak on the 18th we discovered an enemy's convoy of twenty-six vessels standing along shore, between the islands of Tremite and Vasto. The wind was too light and baffling for the frigate to get near them, and the barge, launch, two yawls, and a gig were immediately manned, and placed under my discretionary orders. A general chase now commenced.

Our boats had been formed into three divisions, viz. the launch and second yawl in shore, to the right; the barge and first yawl in the centre; and the gigs to the left in the offing, at such a distance that their force, which was inconsiderable, should not be recognised. The enemy hauled into a snug semicircular bay, forming themselves to its shape the moment they discovered us. In this strong position, with their heads towards us, rudders unshipped, and tackles from their mast-heads to the shore, and strong stern-fasts, they hauled their sterns close on the beach; eight of the number, being armed vessels, were

judiciously placed, three on each horn or wing, and two in the centre.

Our mode of attack was arranged accordingly. I pushed in for the centre; Messrs. Haig and Powell with the launch and second yawl swept the shore on the right, and the gigs had orders to advance slowly on the left. We approached in good order and quickly. When we came within musket-shot, the armed vessels commenced a heavy cannonade, to which compliment we replied with cheers only, until within half pistol-shot, when we returned the fire with grape and canister from our twelve-pound carronade. At the second discharge we were alongside, and the crews fled precipitately over the sterns, wading through the water to the shore, where they afterwards formed to gall us with their musketry, but were soon routed by our marines, and a party under Messrs. Webb and Farewell, reserved for that purpose, and driven to a respectable distance, at which they were kept, while the remainder of our gallant fellows were actively employed in getting the tackling off the shore, shipping the rudders, hauling the vessels off the ground and out of the bay, some of which, in two hours, were actually under weigh for the frigate. With the exception of six salt vessels, the cargoes consisted of almonds and oil, and by four o'clock all were conducted to the ship, two only excepted, which were by our shot sunk and could not be moved; the part above water of these were destroyed by fire, and effectually demolished before we quitted.

The breeze now began to freshen, and the atmosphere had all the appearance of the commencement of a Borea, or N.E. gale; consequently no time was lost in despatching as many of the prizes as we could to Lissa. The salt

craft were scuttled and sunk; the remaining vessels we took in tow.

The gale increased during the night, and caused us great uneasiness for the safety of the eleven prizes sent away, two of which we fell in with the next morning; one being dismasted, the crew had quitted her, and we took her in tow. We were by them informed that one under the command of the Honourable H. J. Rous, midshipman, had upset; but the cargo (oil) being of a buoyant nature, the vessel floated on her broadside, which enabled another, her consort, under the Honourable William Waldegrave, a promising young officer, to pick him and her crew up, with the exception of one man (I think Oliver Cooke), whom they could not by any means get hold of at the moment.

Soon after we fell in with Mr. Rous, who gave us the bearing of the wreck, and the apparent distance. We, of course, immediately cast adrift our tow, and after many hours of tacking, wearing, and diligent search, in various directions, with every telescope in the ship in requisition, in the earnest and anxious expectation of discovering the unfortunate poor fellow, were, at noon, about to relinquish all hope, when our second lieutenant (Hood) imagined he had discovered a something astern of us, which proved to be the wreck, and very soon we perceived the object of our anxiety on it.

We instantly wore round, and in a moment, although the sea was running very high, and it was a dangerous service, I had a boat's crew of volunteers, and picked him up.

He had managed to secure himself with a piece of rope to one of the timber heads on the upper gunwale,

from which, owing to extreme weakness and languor, he had great difficulty to extricate himself. The judicious means resorted to by our skilful surgeon (William Lodge Kidd), together with the attention bestowed on him by all on board, restored the patient in a short time to, at least, a sense of his ameliorated situation.

He informed us that, at daylight, he had perceived the ship advancing towards the wreck, and was overjoyed, being confident that we must have observed him; but, when he saw us about to depart, he thought his heart would instantly break. Considering the size of a large frigate, and the wreck of a comparatively small vessel, occasionally covered with the sea, it is easy to account for the difference in our optics.

All of our prizes arrived in safety except two, which I grieve to say were never heard of. They were commanded by very promising young men, Dobson and Mason. Mr. Few, of whom I have had occasion already to make honourable mention, commanded one of the captured vessels, which was without any ground tackling, and finding that she was drifting rapidly before the gale on the enemy's coast, he adopted the ingenious contrivance of slinging a twelve-pound gun and letting it go as an anchor, and by this means the vessel rode out the gale and was saved from destruction. Another midshipman, Mr. Richardson, by getting his cables out abaft, and letting go his anchors from the stern, though in very deep water, contrived to retard the drifting of his vessel until the gale abated, and thus did he save his prize. This youth had but just commenced his naval career.

It was at this period that a truly dreadful accident occurred on board of the *Bacchante*, and which plunged

all our officers and crew into the profoundest melancholy. On anchoring, a light vessel was brought alongside of us, in order that we might load her with some of the oil-casks that we had saved out of the sinking prizes. A remarkably fine youth, the son of Viscount Anson, had just quitted my side, and had descended into the vessel, to see the process employed in loading her. He had not been two minutes on board, and was apparently at play with another youth about his own age, a Mr. William Barnard, when one of our main-deck guns, by some inexplicable cause, went off, and killed him on the spot, without hurting his companion or any other person whatever. The ball, however, was very nearly killing Captain Duff Markland, of the admiral's ship, the *Milford*, for it whizzed close by his head as he was looking out of the quarter-gallery window.

How this fatal gun had so unhappily gone off was inscrutable. The lanyards and leaden apron over the lock and touch-hole were secured in the best and usual manner. No fire or means of ignition were near it; and as to any vibration or concussion of the decks, caused by our removing the casks, if such existed, it must have been very slight, and equally effective in the adjacent guns. Be the cause what it may, we had to consign to its last long resting-place the mutilated body of a young officer, suddenly cut off in all the promise of youth, at a moment of sportive innocence, and amidst the affections of all around him. Our brave captain was deeply affected, for poor young Anson had been entrusted by his parents to his special care and superintendence.

On the 25th we again stood over to the Apulian coast, and vainly endeavoured to gain some intelligence

of our lost shipmates and prizes. Our ultimate object was the blockade of Venice. We had heard, however, of the most tragical fate of the *Danaë*, French frigate, lying off Trieste.

A seaman who had been punished (and his miscreant nature affords a presumption that his punishment had been merited), had by some contrivance or other procured access to the magazine. Having everything in readiness, he waited only for the captain's returning on board. This officer had been at the opera—from the refined and luxurious enjoyment and splendour of which he had returned to his rougher quarters, and could scarcely have got into his cot, when the diabolical assassin applied his match to the powder, and the noble vessel, with her full complement of (I doubt not) brave men, was in an instant blown to atoms; for only four of them were left to tell this wretched tale.

The *Flore* frigate, that had so shamefully made her escape after she had struck to us, had been wrecked some time back off the coast of Venice; and all that remained of the fine squadron, of which Napoleon had formed such high expectations, was the *Carolina*. What could be a better compliment to our noble captain?

I was engaged to dine with him on the 29th of September, or Michaelmas Day, and off goose—an odd English dinner in such a part of the world. In the morning, it falling a dead calm, and our frigate being only twelve or fourteen miles off the fortified town of Viesta, it struck Captain Hoste that by a flag of truce I might learn whether our poor fellows in the two prizes had perished at sea or whether they had been driven on the enemy's coast and made prisoners of war.

As it was not unusual for Napoleon's officers to disrespect flags of truce, and to violate the security paid to them by civilised nations, I took the worst boat (an old gig), with four volunteers, and I supplied myself with a knapsack, and all other things that might enable me, were I captured, to indulge in my old habits of escaping from French clutches rather than be again taken to Bitche; where a recollection might be had of me that would be by no means consonant to my wishes.

After a long and tedious row we got near to the batteries, which were manned, and exhibited all the bustle of drums and bugles, and all other symptoms of excitement and of brave and noble daring, as if they had been approached by a first-rate ship-of-war, instead of by a small boat containing only four men under a flag of truce, which showed that they were unarmed.

As we approached the centre of the fort the soldiers crowded the ramparts, making the most violent demonstrations with their side-arms, brandishing their swords, and using the most abusive language towards us.

I pursued my object, pointing to my flag of truce, and to a packet of papers which I held in my hands; but a number of officers and soldiers rushed from the sally-port to the water's edge, using the most disgusting language, swearing that they would cut us to pieces if we attempted to land.

I appealed to the officer upon the respect due to a flag of truce: and I anxiously inquired after the fate of my companions, but I was unhappily convinced that he knew nothing of them, for all the reply I got was a charge that, under the pretext of a flag of truce, I had approached solely with a view to discover the state of the garrison,

and we deserved to be shot as spies. I had therefore only to rejoin my ship, where an ample portion of goose was reserved for me by my good chief.

We repaired off Venice, where, on the 14th of October, we discovered, in company with the *Achille*, that the enemy had three sail of the line more ready than willing, we imagined, to put to sea. With this intelligence we were despatched to our Admiral Freemantle, at Lissa, and again returned, after capturing two *trabaccolos*, laden with firewood, close in on the Istrian coast. There was a good deal of boat-fighting on this occasion, as they were covered by musketry from the shore; however, we had not sustained any loss; and we soon had a much better exploit.

As there could not have been for the Adriatic and its coasts a better pilot than Captain Hoste, in passing between the Brioni Islands and the main, a large quantity of ship timber was discovered by us lying on the beach, near the town of Fazano, on the Istrian shore, which he determined to seize and embark the first convenient opportunity, which soon presented itself.

On the 13th of November, after having been opposed by adverse winds and drifted by currents, we found the commodore, Captain Rowley, in the *Eagle*, with the *Achille*, Captain Hollis, in company. Captain Hoste gave the former the information, who immediately acquiesced in a proposal made by our gallant chief to bring the timber off. The commodore kindly declared, that as it had been discovered by him, the command of the forces necessary for the execution of that service should be given to his first-lieutenant (myself), and that he, the commodore, with the other line-of-battle ship, would be most

happy to supply as many officers and men as might be deemed expedient for the purpose.

Arrangements were accordingly made: light winds, together with the draft of water they required, prevented the line-of-battle ships getting near enough to the shore to cover the debarcation, but the *Bacchante* was enabled to take her position sufficiently close to the town, with springs on her cables, and all boats were out and in readiness at an hour before daylight on the 14th.

The marines, with the seamen of the *Eagle* and *Bacchante* intended for the service, pulled off from the frigate for the shore at daybreak (those of the *Achille*, being at a great distance in the offing, not having arrived), with three hearty cheers, which were returned with great animation by our good captain and shipmates. My orders, as on former occasions, were discretionary, with a proviso that, in the first instance, it was indispensably necessary to take the town of Fazano.

In about twenty minutes we were all landed, and in a very few minutes more had possession of the town, and had the pleasure of seeing the British colours flying from the top of the church steeple without opposition, for the troops and militia had abandoned the place on our approach. All the advantageous positions were instantly occupied by our marines, under the command of Lieutenants Holmes and Haig; the enemy we observed on the adjacent heights, waiting, we supposed, for a reinforcement from the garrison of Pola, only eight miles distant, and where they had a formidable force, having in that place regular fortifications.

Immediately on our colours being displayed I searched out and found the *padré*, or chief clergyman, to whom I

communicated our intention of taking off all the ship timber, as it was a Napoleon or government concern, adding, that we waged no war against the inhabitants, nor should they be in the slightest way molested; whatever provision or merchandise they had to dispose of, we should purchase at their own prices; the fishermen and boats I should put in requisition, to aid in the embarcation of the timber, after which they would be allowed to depart freely. All these particulars I requested the good *padré* would have the kindness to communicate to his flock, who received joyfully the intelligence, and to work we went most willingly—none more so than the natives, who I believe, if they durst declare it, were more attached to us than to the usurper and his myrmidons.

The timber proved to be solid oak, and so ponderous that on launching it sunk like lead; therefore we were under the necessity of slinging or hanging every beam and piece of it to the boats' sides, as rafting it off was out of the question.

By sunset the frigate was nearly full; the lower decks and booms were the only places where it could be conveniently placed, so as not to interrupt the working of the guns, and our signal was made for re-embarcing, which was complied with, with the most exact precision and in perfect order, without a casualty with the exception that one of our carpenter's crew, named Remmings, was missing, whom we strongly suspected of having an intention to desert. The troops and militia entered the town at the moment of our embarcation. Early on the next morning, the 15th, we again landed and resumed our duties with the same facility, the enemy having retired from the town to the heights as on the preceding day; and

by ten o'clock we had sent off all that the ship could possibly contain. Having destroyed the remainder, we returned to the frigate; just as I was informed that the enemy was advancing in great force, with a determination to drive us into the sea.

We were next despatched to Corfu, off which island Captain Hoste appeared on the 24th December, it blowing a hurricane at the time.

On 5th January 1813, when passing the Island of Fano, early in the afternoon, we discovered a flotilla of gun-vessels standing out to sea, evidently bound across to Otranto. The wind being fair for the Adriatic, we crowded all possible sail, as if making a passage up the Gulf without perceiving the enemy's flotilla, which lowered their sails and hauled in under the high cliffs of the island. The moment we lost sight of them, we shortened sail, and stood over close-hauled on a wind, for Otranto, in the hope of cutting them off on the morning following. At midnight we were made happy by a number of letters from England, which the *Weazle* had recently received.

On the 6th, at about half-past five, the officer of the watch sent a midshipman to inform me that it was a perfect calm, with light only sufficient to distinguish that we were at a short distance from five gunboats of the enemy, then exactly midway between Corfu and Otranto. Our *ruse de guerre* had evidently so far proved successful. The *Weazle* was not more than four miles from us, but in an opposite direction to the flotilla, now about six or seven miles distant. This service, as there was no wind, was necessarily to be executed by our boats, which were in readiness by six o'clock, and which I had the honour of commanding.

As on former occasions, my gallant friend, Lieutenant Haig of the marines, always active and zealous in the service of his king and his country, accompanied me in the barge. Lieutenant Hood commanded the launch; Lieutenant Gosling, the second yawl; Mr. Edward Webb, master's mate, the first yawl and two gigs, one of which was commanded by Mr. Hoste, midshipman.

The enemy, perceiving the preparations, separated, two of them taking the direction back towards Corfu; the remaining three, with sails furled, kept their course towards Otranto, sweeping with all their might, which division we pursued, Mr. Webb, with whom the *Weazle's* boats were directed to co-operate, chasing the former division.

After two good hours' chase, we in the barge closed with the sternmost gunboat, the officer of which kept up an incessant and well-directed fire of round and grape, that splintered several of the oars; but not a man was wounded, and to this fire we could reply by cheers only, as otherwise we should have been obliged to lay in our oars, which, of course, would retard our progress in closing. Now nearly alongside, and about to cease rowing, we discharged our twelve-pound carronade with grape, which wounded two of his men; and, seeing that we were ready to lay him on board, he thought proper to haul down his colours.

The other boats coming up, I pushed on for the next ahead. To Mr. Hoste, whose gig kept the whole time close to the barge, I left charge of the prize. I perceived him take possession in good style with his little crew, send the prisoners below off the deck, and, with amazing celerity, he had her bow-gun, which traversed upon a pivot, to bear upon the chase, contributing greatly to her

Capture of a French Flotilla off Otranto.

surrender, though a fine breeze now sprang up, which enabled them to make sail—which, of course, we did also; as did the frigate when it reached her, though at a great distance to leeward.

The third gunboat was closing fast with the Neapolitan coast, but we gained upon her, and in little more than an hour we had the satisfaction of having captured the whole, without any loss whatever on our side.

Mr. Webb, in the first yawl, captured the sternmost of the two which he had been in chase of, before the *Weazle* or her boats (notwithstanding they used every exertion) could co-operate. However, as they were rapidly advancing, he left his prize to be taken possession of by them, and, pushing forward, boarded and carried, in the most gallant manner, the other, ably supported by the Hon. H. J. Rous. All proved to be vessels of a superior description and very fast craft: their officers stated that they were bound to Otranto, for the purpose of picking up and fetching back to Corfu specie for the payment of the troops in that island.

Their guns were fitted on a pivot, which enabled them to traverse and fire in any direction, without altering the course; it was by this means that they were enabled to annoy our boats so much in approaching, as I have already stated. We found it necessary to bear up for Valona Bay, in order to put our prizes in a state to encounter bad weather, which, from all appearances, was then to be expected.

On the 8th we sailed with them for the Island of Zante; and the next day, when off Fano, we captured a convoy consisting of five vessels, laden with provisions, for Corfu. The weather again becoming boisterous, compelled

us to return to our anchorage, and to destroy two of the gunboats; a third was missing, which we feared must have gone down. If I am not mistaken, it was the *Calypso*, under the command of Mr. Edward O. Pocock.

13*th January*.—We were now again on our passage to Zante with the prizes captured on the 9th inst.: the weather becoming boisterous, buffeted them about very much, and on the 23rd it became still more inclement, which obliged us to take young Mr. Hoste and the crew out of one until the weather abated. Another, commanded by Mr. Few, which we had left perfectly secure and well in under the Island of Zante, we perceived early the next morning (24th), bearing down to us with the signal of distress at the mast-head. I obtained permission from Captain Hoste to proceed with a volunteer crew (as was usual on dangerous occasions) to her assistance. On coming within hail, I received the melancholy intelligence of the loss of this very promising young man, Mr. Few,[1] in the night. It happened that, in the act of wearing, the vessel's fore-yard struck him, and tossed him completely overboard: the night was excessively dark, and a mountainous sea running; the crew had heard him call out, but could not see him or render any assistance. This severe loss cast a gloom over all hands. Another young gentleman was placed in command; and, having seen all our prizes safe into Zante (with the exception of the three which were missing), we resumed our station off Corfu.

[1] This was the midshipman who made the sketch from which the illustration facing page 314 is reproduced.

CHAPTER XVIII

Capture of General Bordé and his staff—A gallant boarding exploit—A horrible murder by Italian prisoners of war—Success of our navy—A balance of accounts—My promotion—Quitting the *Bacchante*—Pain of leaving old friends and brave shipmates—The plague at Malta—Captain Pell gives me a passage home—An ineffectual chase and a narrow escape—Stratagems of the enemy—Toulon—Gibraltar—The English Channel—Ingenious device of Captain Pell resulting in the curious capture of a French privateer—Arrival in England—A kind reception by the First Lord of the Admiralty—An official promise—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick"—A return to London—The peace of 1814—Its consequences—Half-pay and an end to all adventures.

On 13th February, at about 10 o'clock P.M., after a long chase we captured the *Vigilante*, a French courier gun-boat bound for Otranto with despatches, which, of course, were thrown overboard before we took possession of her. She had on board of her General Bordé with his staff, who, we had discovered by intercepted letters, was then on his passage to take the command of the French forces at Verona.

At 2 A.M., being about ten or twelve miles from Otranto, a sail was perceived steering for that port. The wind being very light, our boats were despatched under Lieutenant Hood, who captured the enemy by boarding, in a gallant style, after a warm salute of grape and musketry, and before the rest of our boats could join

him. This brave exploit reflected the greatest honour on this officer and his boat's crew.

The prize proved to be the *Alcinous*, carrying a twenty-four-pounder carronade forward and an eighteen-pounder abaft. She had left Corfu with eight merchant-vessels, the whole of which we captured. The only person wounded on this occasion was the gallant commander, Lieutenant Hood, who received an injury in the vertebræ, which eventually deprived him of the use of the lower extremities by paralysis.

Of our three recent prizes, which were missing when we left Zante, we now found that one had arrived at her place of destination, but the third was still unheard of, and a most melancholy account was given of the second, under the command of Mr. Cornwallis Paley, a fine, promising young gentleman, who was beloved and esteemed by our captain and by everybody on board, and who had distinguished himself in the action off Lissa.

Mr. Paley's crew, on taking charge of the prize, consisted of three excellent seamen and a young lad, a mizzen-top man. Three of the Italian prisoners were left on board, to assist in navigating the vessel. After parting company, a fourth Italian, who had been concealed in the hold, made his appearance on deck. It turned out that he had been the principal person who was interested in the vessel and cargo. The brave and honourable Englishman, influenced by his humanity, allowed the supplicating creature to join his countrymen. He was plausible and obsequious, and poor Paley, it appears, had rather liked his society as a relief to the dulness and monotony of his passage. Becalmed off Corfu, this miscreant proposed to Mr. Paley to anchor, which he did, and went below to dinner with his three seamen, leaving the four Italians

and the English lad on deck. The Italians watched their opportunity, and seizing the young man murdered him, and then laid on the hatches to keep the English below. Poor Paley, hearing a noise on deck, suspected that all was not right, and starting from the table he forced one of the hatches up sufficiently to thrust his head on deck, when the inhuman wretches seized him by the hair, pulled his head back on the combings, and instantly cut his throat. The other three Englishmen were attacked in succession, and hewed down with an axe: the murderers eventually took the vessel into Corfu, where poor Paley and two of our seamen were interred; the other two, after they had recovered from their wounds, were exchanged and sent on board of us; and from them we learnt the appalling information. Was it not disgraceful that the public authorities did not bring these criminals to justice? Allowing prisoners to rise upon their captors can only have the effect of obliging conquerors to increase the severity inseparable from captivity, even in its mildest form; but when prisoners resort to butchery and murder, it behoves all civilised governments to bring them to justice.

For want of bread and provisions we were now obliged to repair to Malta; and from thence we returned to Zante and the Adriatic, to bid adieu to Admiral Freemantle—Captain Hoste having, in the interim, received orders from the commander-in-chief (Sir Edward Pellew) to join him off Toulon.

But, having again arrived at Malta on 19th April, I almost immediately received from Captain Hoste the joyful news that the Admiralty, in reward of my services up to 18th September 1812, had promoted me to the rank of commander. It would be injustice to my kind friends, were any fears of being accused of vanity to make me

hesitate in saying that my promotion was hailed by my brave captain, and all my brother officers and the ship's company, with a cordiality most grateful to my feelings. On the 22nd I quitted my companions in arms and my social friends, and bade adieu to the glorious frigate *Bacchante*, which received counter orders from Sir Edward Pellew to return to the Adriatic station.

My commission was dated 22nd January, sixteen days after I had been engaged in capturing the Corfu flotilla; and, in the hope that the arrival of the news of this victory would induce their lordships of the Admiralty to give me the command of a sloop-of-war in the Mediterranean, I remained at Malta, though the plague was raging most violently. It was the doctrine of the medical profession that the disease could be taken, not by infection, but only by contact, and therefore, mounted on a spirited charger, I daily rode through all parts of the city.

Captain Hollis of the *Achille* found difficulty in taking me as a passenger to England, from an apprehension that I might communicate the plague; and at last I sailed in H.M. bomb-ship *Thunder*, commanded by Watkin O. Pell.

In passing through the Straits of Bonifacio we ineffectually chased several of the Corsican coral-boats. Some of our cruisers were more fortunate. The *Rainbow*, Captain William Gawen Hamilton, caught two of them.

We made the land off Toulon early in the morning, and narrowly did we escape capture. We were delighted at discovering what we supposed to be our own Mediterranean fleet, consisting of sixteen sail of the line, about ten miles from Cape Sicie. We should have rushed into the arms of supposed friends, had we not found, on coming within signal distance, that our private signal was not answered. The enemy, the better to deceive us, kept four

sail of the line in advance (for which we steered, and made our signal to them), so that the remaining twelve might appear as a French fleet in chase of an English squadron. Discovering our error, we crowded all sail, and the caution of the enemy was evinced; for we sailed heavily, yet they dared not follow us (although they had a leading wind), lest they should lose the opportunity of regaining their port.

At Gibraltar, I had the satisfaction of receiving numerous letters from friends at home, some of them of very old dates, that had been in pursuit of me all over the Mediterranean and Levant.

At length we arrived at Portsmouth, and had to remain for six weeks in quarantine at the Mother-Bank. The joys of revisiting our own country were thus most cruelly damped. Never did men suffer more of tantalization. However, on the 4th of October, I had the happiness of putting my foot on England's soil. I landed at Portsmouth, bade adieu to my hospitable host of the *Thunder*, and his kind and excellent officers, and made arrangements to proceed to London.

I had to regret that I had not gone up the Channel with my friend Captain Pell, who was ordered to take the *Thunder* to Woolwich. Off the Oars' light, he discovered a lugger to windward, under easy sail, which he suspected to be an enemy. Captain Pell directly altered his course, and bore up for the land, as if, to avoid capture, he intended to run his ship on shore. He yawed and steered wildly, and by these, and other symptoms of fear and confusion, the enemy was completely deceived. The lugger soon came up with the chase, and made an awful display of boarders; her decks being crowded with armed men. She at last hailed Captain Pell to strike his colours, or she would sink him. The order, of course, was not obeyed,

and the lugger put her helm up to board. Pell immediately put his helm the contrary way, which instantly brought the boasting and confident enemy across the hawse of H.M. ship *Thunder*, and not of the harmless merchantman they had supposed. The brave and ingenious Pell had now succeeded both in his stratagem and manœuvre; and, seizing on the critical moment, he poured into the astonished Frenchmen the full contents of grape and canister of four guns; and, following this up by a volley of musketry, he rushed with his men (whom he had hitherto kept concealed) upon the enemy's deck, and soon was the English flag floating over the tricolour. The enemy had four men killed and ten wounded; the *Thunder* had only two wounded. This was a fortunate finale to our gallant officer's cruise. The prize proved to be the *Neptune*, of sixteen guns, with a complement of sixty-five men actually on board; and the capture was important, as this fast-sailing, well-equipped vessel had been a great annoyance to our trade in the Channel. She was taken into Ramsgate. My friend, Captain Pell, was most deservedly advanced, for his numerous services, to the rank of post-captain, on the first of the ensuing month of November.

Arrived in London, the first Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Melville, received me courteously, and complimented me on my promotion, which he was pleased to say I had won by my services and merit. I pointed out to his lordship that the important capture of the Corfu flotilla, which had been achieved by me, was unknown in England when my promotion had been given to me, and I urged that I hoped this last service might procure me a ship. Lord Melville's reply was, on my taking leave of his lordship, "You shall go afloat, Captain O'Brien; we will not keep you on shore."

Most joyfully was I received by all my friends; whilst my naval companions congratulated me on the certainty of my soon receiving an eligible command. Week after week did I remain in the expensive metropolis, in the hope of getting a ship.

The success of the Americans at sea, and the capture of the gallant *Guerrière*,[1] by her leviathan opponent, now formed the subject of public and private conversation. I felt most anxious to be on the shores of the New World; but after writing to Lord Melville, and reminding him of his promise, I received an official reply, "That I was noted for consideration *at a convenient opportunity*."

It was clear that a long holiday was before me, so passing over to Ireland I had the heavenly happiness of embracing my honoured and beloved parents, who had come to the Irish metropolis to receive me. Let no man undervalue the happiness of life who has felt the joy of embracing parents, after a long and painful absence, in which he has suffered much, and has been also fortunate in bearing a distinguished part in participating in honourable public services.

During the autumn of 1814 I was attacked with ague, a disease common to the bay of Dublin, and was in a state of convalescence when I received a welcome and unexpected official letter from the Admiralty, desiring me to repair immediately to London.

I proceeded to London forthwith, but, from a boisterous and unpleasant passage, had a relapse of the disease. However, as soon as I was equal to it, I saw Mr. Hay, the private secretary of the First Lord of the Admiralty, who

[1] Captured by the *Constitution*, Aug. 19, 1812. The American frigate was decidedly a larger and stronger vessel, yet hardly enough so to justify O'Brien in calling her a "leviathan."

received me very kindly; and the interview ended in his requesting me to leave my London address, as it was the intention of the First Lord to give me a ship.

I thanked Mr. Hay very much for the information, and took my leave by stating to him that I had been confined to my bed a fortnight, and that this was my first attempt at moving out.

Day after day I passed in feverish anxieties for the arrival of the letter appointing me to a command. Days, weeks, months, and, I may say, years passed, and no such letter was received.

Unfortunately for me, Napoleon had fallen six months before, and peace with America was now talked of; to this I attribute mainly the neglect of my incessant and anxious applications to be employed. The reply always was, that "I was noted for consideration at a convenient opportunity"; but there was added after a time the unhappy news, "that it was not intended at present to place any more ships in commission."

I had seen my last war service, and may now bring my narrative to a conclusion.

Whatever may have been the circumstances of my captivity, the painful adventures that I was destined to endure, and the innumerable varieties of incidents that were crowded into my chequered fate, I trust that one thing is evident to the reader—that the honour of the British empire, with the character of the naval service, has always been uppermost in my mind: that I have ever loyally served—

> The flag that braved a thousand years
> The battle and the breeze.

FINIS

APPENDIX

A Copy of Mr. Archibald Barklimore's *Letter to* Capt. D. H. O'Brien, *on his arriving in England.*

14 *Dean Street, Soho,*

My dear O'Brien—I hasten, knowing how anxious you will be to hear from your old fellow-traveller and fellow-prisoner, to inform you of my safe arrival in London, where I have been received and welcomed by numerous friends, as if I had actually been a resuscitated creature from the other world.

When I now look around me and see the cheerful countenances of the people of Old England, blessed in security under a paternal and just Government, I cannot help contrasting them with the meagre, squalid faces of those we have left behind, groaning under the tyranny of an usurper. Nor can I, my dear friend, conceal from you that I feel a something within me which proclaims aloud the great superiority of the British nation, and makes me no longer wonder that her sons, with their daring spirit, should break through prisons, bolts, and bars, and fly to protect so sacred a home! Shall I ever forget our exploits in scaling ramparts, eluding the vigilance of sentinels and guards, and all the hairbreadth 'scapes we had to encounter, from the time we got clear of the fortress of Bitche, until you had been hoisted up in a chair, with your disabled arm (which I fear you will lose), on board the *Amphion?* That, my good friend, was a severe conflict, and one which I shall never forget. It was the first time I had ever set my foot on board of a British ship-of-war's boat; and it will be, I hope, a very long time before I again volunteer to go a cruise in one upon the enemy's coast—at all events on the coast of Dalmatia.

A very remarkable circumstance has occurred since you and I parted, and would appear more like those unnatural tales of romance, of which we read in novels, than anything founded in truth incontestable. You must recollect the

miserable and destitute plight in which our unfortunate companion, poor Batley, was, when we were driven to the necessity of leaving him at Rastadt: well, he was again arrested in Würtemberg, and confined closely in a prison; whence, after some weeks, he had the good fortune to outwit his keepers, and effect his escape. The poor fellow's funds were now nearly exhausted, and little or no hope left him of ever being able to succeed. In this forlorn state, quite desponding, and overwhelmed with anguish, his singular appearance—you know what a tall, meagre, poor-looking creature "fat Jack" was—caught the eye of a lady who happened to be passing at that moment on the road. Her benign countenance gave him courage; he advanced and accosted her in his best manner—for Jack had the manners and address of a gentleman—explained to her candidly who he was, and his deplorable situation, and earnestly begged she would assist him in prosecuting his journey to Trieste. Most fortunately for him, this lady proved to be the wife of an officer at that time in the British army. She entered fully into his distressed condition, procured him the means which enabled him to reach Vienna; thence he proceeded to Trieste, where he found your old ship *Amphion* ready to sail for Malta, and arrived there only, he stated, a few minutes before honest Hewson and you had quitted Malta in the *Leonidas*, to join Lord Collingwood.

The ship which I was in touched at Gibraltar; and on landing there, the first person I met was my long-lost friend Batley: never were two people more surprised and better pleased to catch once more a sight of each other. He immediately quitted his vessel, and engaged a passage in the same ship with me, and we arrived safe in England together.

I remain, My dear O'Brien,

Your sincere friend,

(Signed) Archd. Barklimore.

2nd April 1809.

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

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